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Feature Story

"The INTRIGUERS"

by GROVER KIDWELL

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The INTRIGUERS

by Grover Kidwell

CHAPTER ONE

"HE fell off his hoss right here, Sheriff Morris," said Deputy Sheriff Bill Potter, pointing at the ground with a long, sunburned finger. "Take a look at that little cliff up thar. I figure that the feller that killed Lewis Terry was on top of that."

"I see," I replied, looking up at the ledge of rock which showed in a place or two among the trees. It was about thirty paces from us, and appeared to be something like fifteen feet high. "And this path that goes up by the cliff?" I added. "Where does it lead?"

"Over to the house where Lewis Terry had been to see his sweetheart," my deputy replied. "Goin' by the path, the house ain't more'n haff a mile from here. Aroun' this road, though, it's about a mile and a haff. Lewis was ridin', you know, and he come by the road. A hoss can't travel this near-cut."

The road which my deputy mentioned was nothing more than a rocky trail around a high ridge.

"I see," I said again, looking at the spot where Lewis Terry had tumbled from his horse. "Terry was killed instantly, I believe you said?"

"I didn't think he could 'a' lived long, judgin' from the fact that the bullet, accordin' to the doctor that examined him, cut a big artery clost to his heart. Anyhow, he was cold and stiff when he was found at dawn this mornin'."

My deputy and I were standing at the foot of a sharp-backed ridge over in the White Oak country of east Tennessee. For half a day Bill Potter, himself a native of the White Oak country, had worked on the mystery surrounding Lewis Terry's death; then he had ridden to the county-seat, ten miles away, to report to me, and I had come into the woods with him to try to get a line on young Terry's treacherous slayer. It was late in the afternoon when we reached the scene of the tragedy, and the forest surrounding us was already growing a bit dusky.

Bill Potter's story of what he had learned about the killing did not seem to get us anywhere, except that it served to make us sure that in Tom Griffin, another ycung man of the White Oak country, Lewis Terry had had an earnest rival for the favor of Lillie Boone. Lillie had not seemed to care very much for Griffin; in fact, folks understood that she thought a great deal of Terry, and had intended to marry him; but, in spite of this, Griffin and

Terry had quarreled over the girl several times.

Lewis Terry lived only three-quarters of a mile or so from where he lost his life. Not far from Terry's home stood the log house of Tom Griffin's father.

On the night of the tragedy Lewis Terry had ridden over to John Boone's house to call on the latter's daughter, Lillie. He remained with her till about ten o'clock, my deputy learned, and then started home, following the trail around the end of the ridge already mentioned. There had been a very bright full moon, and that was why my deputy believed that Lewis Terry could have been killed with a rifle or a revolver from off the little cliff above the trail, more especially since he had found the prints of a man's shoes up there. Riding along only thirty paces or so away, Terry would have offered a fair target for a good marksman.

However that may have been, Terry was murdered on his way home from calling on the girl he was supposed to have loved. My deputy had found nothing to warrant his making an arrest, but from what he had told me concerning Tom Griffin, I knew that he considered the latter a very possible suspect. I might add that in giving me his story my tall, lanky, blue-eyed deputy had seemed, somehow, to hold something back regarding his interview with Griffin.

Now, as Potter and I stood there on the trail, looking at the spot where Lewis Terry had fallen, I carefully weighed all my deputy had told me, searching through it for something that might point in some definite direction.

"And who did you say found Terry's body?" I inquired.

"A feller by the name of Ike Summit," Potter answered. "He lives acrost the ridge, about a mile on the other side of John Boone's house. He was goin' to mill with a sack of corn when he found Lewis. On his way to tell me about it he went by Lewis Terry's house and told the Terrys what had happened. I got here jist as quick as I could, and I found Terry's ole dad and mother weepin' over their son. I let 'em have him took home right away. Then I went to work on the case."

While Potter and I talked I searched carefully about the spot where Lewis Terry fell. Finding nothing on the trail that seemed to suggest a clue, I told Potter we had better go up and have a look at the top of the little cliff.

"That's right, Sheriff Morris," said the deputy. "I might 'a' overlooked somethin' up thar. I was plum' excited and mad, I'll admit, fer I thought a right smart of Lewis."

We left the trail and went up the ridge, following the crooked path—called a "near-cut" by the mountain people—which led over to John Boone's house. When we were on a level with the cliff, but a little distance south of it, we turned from the path and approached the spot where, we believed, the slayer had stood when he fired the shot which killed Lewis Terry.

And it was now that something of a very startling nature occurred—something that all but cost Bill Potter his life. As we paused among the trees and bushes behind the edge of the cliff a gun crashed in the silent woods above us, and at the same instant my deputy's black hat leaped from his head. We both ducked instinctively, and just as instinctively we reached for our revolvers. I noticed that Potter spat out an oath as he drew back the hammer of his .45.

"What the devil!" he exclaimed. "Seems like somebody's atter us, too, Sheriff Morris. That sure was a clost call fer me."

"You're lucky, Potter," I said, peering around one of the bushes in an effort to see who was firing at us. "You must have felt the heat from that, Potter."

"I didn't feel nothin' else," said Potter grimly; and the fellow reached for his hat, which lay a yard or so behind him. "Through the side of the crown," he muttered. "The bullet glanced off this buckle on the leather band, and that's why the hat left my head. And it's plum' ruined!"

For a moment we remained stooped behind the bushes, each of us trying to get a glimpse of the person who had fired.

"Well, what we gonna do, Sheriff?" Potter inquired. "Stan' here and let that critter git away? I guess he must be the one

that killed Lewis Terry. He's on the war-path agin because he thinks, I guess, that we've already got somethin' on him. Looks that way."

"This is risky, Potter, but we must try to gather him in," I said. "Come on—straight up the ridge."

As I finished we broke through the growth in a rush, ten or twelve feet apart, and with our revolvers held ready for action. We had gone only a short distance when there was another shot, and this time a twig flew from a bush near Potter's head. It seemed that some one was trying especially to kill my deputy, for apparently both shots had been aimed at him.

Potter answered the second shot with a loud oath and a shot from his own pistol. But the unknown person had fired from farther away this time, and though Potter may have seen the flash of his gun, I knew my deputy's chance of hitting him was almost too slender to mention, for of course the fellow had fired from cover.

"Come on, Sheriff!" Potter called with an angry wave of his revolver. "The devil's headin' fer the top of the ridge! Let's git him!"

But we didn't get him. We were not able to catch so much as a glimpse of him. Without getting far apart, we hurried straight up the side of the ridge; and when we paused on top of it to rest we had no idea which direction the fellow had taken.

"Something mighty queer about this, Potter," I said. "It doesn't seem reasonable that Lewis Terry's slayer would come back here to run such a risk, unless he happens to be crazy."

"Er unless," Potter returned, "he thinks we've already got somethin' on him, like I've done said."

"That's possible, perhaps, but it isn't very convincing. It seems that the fellow was shooting at you, Potter. If he thought you had a clue that pointed at him he would have reasoned that I knew about it, too, and so he would have tried hard to kill both of us."

"That's right." Potter took off his hat and looked at the punctured crown, frowning thoughtfully. "Yes, that's right; it did seem like he was atter jist me. But what we gonna do, Sheriff?" he added. "The longer we stan' here, the more time that critter'll have to cover up. I think I know what our next move ought to be."

"Then tell it, Potter."

"I think we had better git to our horses and make fer Tom Griffin's house, at the north end of this ridge. We can make it in a little or no time—maybe afore Tom Griffin can reach thar, if it was him that come so darn near gittin' me. I've got a strong suspicion."

I answered Potter by starting quickly for the crooked path that led down the ridge.

"If we don't find him at home," my deputy added, "it'll be plum' interestin' to learn jist where he was when this shootin' was goin' on."

There was bitterness in Potter's voice. I glanced back and saw him feeling of his hat.

CHAPTER TWO

WE had hitched our horses in the woods near the trail. In a little while we were riding swiftly toward the home of Tom Griffin.

We were not long in reaching a point a little distance from the Griffin place. There among a clump of pine trees we again hitched our horses. After talking together a moment or two, we approached the house, which sat between two hills. It contained but two rooms and a shed kitchen, and about it were a few scrubby-looking apple trees.

A light was shining from a window in one of the front rooms, and as we drew near the wide porch a hound dog set up a loud barking. At this a door opened and the form of a grizzled old man stood outlined in the pale light of a lamp that burned on a table behind him.

"Hello, out thar!" he said in a cracked, querulous voice. "Who is it?"

"Me and Sheriff Morris," my deputy answered. "We want to see Tom. Is he here?"

"Oh, it's you ag'in, is it?" the old man returned sneeringly. "No, Tom ain't here. Anything else hurtin' you?"

"Not another darn thing," said Potter. "Good-night, Hank Griffin, and happy dreams."

"And you can go to the devil!" said old Griffin, and he gave the door a slam that sounded like the crack of a pistol.

At this my deputy broke into a cackling laugh.

"The illest ole scamp in seven States, Mister Morris," he said.

But my deputy grew serious as we started away from the house. I knew he was thinking deeply.

"If it was Tom Griffin that tried to shoot me," he began, "I think the critter'll be gittin' home afore long. So let's jist go down thar by the path and hide. My suspicions about Tom Griffin ain't built on nothin'."

The path which my deputy mentioned led from old Griffin's house to the road. Near this path, and about halfway between the road and the house, Potter and I concealed ourselves among some bushes. There we sat listening, talking in whispers and smoking for half an hour or more. We were debating as to whether we would stay longer, when suddenly we heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

We waited till the footsteps were within ten or twelve paces of us, then we rushed from the bushes, Potter leading the way with his .45 swinging from his big right hand. I was glad the moon had already risen, allowing us to see what we were about.

"Howdy, Tom Griffin!" my deputy said in a snarling, threatening voice; for the man proved to be the person we were looking for. "Where the dickens have you been? I already know, Tom Griffin, but I jist want to hear what you've got to say about it."

"It's none of your business, Bill Potter," Griffin replied angrily, standing face to face with my deputy. "I'm gittin' tired bein' bothered by you, feller, no matter if you are a deputy sheriff."

"Is that so?" said Potter mockingly, thrusting his face almost against that of the other. "Well, I ain't begin to bother you yet. I'm aimin' to handcuff you afore I'm through with you."

Griffin stepped back with a snarl, and at the same moment my deputy took a step forward. I thought Griffin made as if to reach for a gun, but the lanky Potter was too swift for him. The latter's long arm swept upward, and the barrel of his .45 was thrust under Tom's nose. In a quick, harsh voice he told Tom to throw up his hands. As Griffin obeyed my deputy snatched a revolver from a holster under the fellow's coat.

"Look at that, Mister Morris," Potter said with a triumphant air, handing me the revolver. "See if this critter's been doin' any shootin' lately. Maybe he ain't even had sense enough to throw the empty shells out of his gun."

I examined the weapon closely. Although it was not a large revolver, it was heavy and powerful, for it was built to use long rifle cartridges of .32 caliber. I swung the cylinder out and looked at it, then placed the end of the barrel to my nostrils.

"It's loaded all around," I informed Potter. "But this gun was fired recently—only a little while ago, I should say."

"Ah-ha!" Potter exclaimed tragically, his blue eyes glittering as he glared into Tom Griffin's face. "You tried to kill me, hey?"

There was a moment of silence while the two men looked at each other, and during the pause I studied Tom Griffin. He was of medium height and appeared uncommonly muscular. His face was very broad and a bit dark, and there was a hard, bitter look about his wide mouth and square chin.

"No, I didn't try to kill you," he said, answering Potter's question. "I guess I ought to 'a' tried it afore now, the way you talked to me and treated me today, but I thought I'd let it pass. I don't know what you're drivin' at now."

"Oh, don't you?" Potter returned savagely, and I noticed that he held his big revolver as if he wanted Griffin to believe he was about to use it as a club. "Oh, you don't, hey? Well, I say you do know what I'm drivin' at, feller. You was over that

on the ridge a little while ago, clost to where you killed Lewis Terry last night, and you shot at me twice. Don't tell me you didn't, feller. I know you did. I saw you makin' off up the ridge. I *saw* you, feller! Do you git that?"

But Tom Griffin sneered at Potter's roughly put accusation.

"That's a lie," he said. "I ain't been in the direction of the place where Lewis was killed. I still say I ought to 'a' shot you afore now, but I'm tellin' you I ain't tried it. As fer me killin' Lewis Terry—well, that's a lie I ought not to take the trouble to even answer. Anyhow, you seen me about that this mornin'."

"And you lied to me this mornin' jist like you're lyin' now, of course," Potter accused him. "I can't prove, right at this minute, that you killed Lewis Terry, but I *saw* you when you was shootin' at me over thar on the ridge. Besides, here's this other evidence. The pistol I took off of you has been fired in the last little while. The Sheriff says so, and we both know he's right."

"Yes, Sheriff Morris is right; I did fire my pistol a little while ago," he admitted; and I thought that now he made an effort to control his feelings. "I've been over on Tackett Creek, and as I come back I shot at a rabbit two er three times."

"Just a minute, Potter," I broke in as the deputy was about to reply. I spoke impatiently, for I was growing a bit tired of Bill's crude method of questioning this hard-looking suspect. My real reason for stopping him, though, was quite a good deal deeper than that.

"It was you that did the shooting over on the ridge, Griffin," I said decidedly. "I don't think you wanted to kill me, but you must be the chap that tried to murder my deputy. You hate him."

"I do hate him, Sheriff Morris," Tom replied frankly, "but I'm tellin' you both ag'in that it wasn't me that done the shootin'. As to hatin' you, Bill Potter," he added, "you know I've got a right to hate you."

"Why do you say that?" I inquired. "Why do you hate Potter, and what made you say a moment ago that you should have tried to kill him?" Though I questioned him like that, I knew what his answer would be before he spoke. I had already guessed the truth.

"I ain't never liked him," Tom Griffin answered. "But the way he treated me when he came to my house this mornin' was enough to make me hate him even if I hadn't never seen him afore. He treated me like I was a dog. He held his pistol under my nose and pushed me aroun' and called me all kinds of names. He acted like he was gonna bust my head jist because I wouldn't say I was guilty of a crime I know nothin' about. He told me I was a cold-blooded killer, and he swore he'd send me to the chair fer killin' Lewis Terry. And all the time I knowed he didn't have any excuse to treat me like that. He didn't have a bit of reason fer accusin' me of killin' Lewis."

I looked at Potter. He was flushing angrily.

"This feller is a bad law-breaker, Sheriff Morris," he said. "He's got a plum' bad reputation as a gun-toter, and he's been in the pen once fer moonshinin'. I thought I had reason to feel that it was him that killed Lewis Terry, and I think I treated him jist like I ought to 'a' treated him. I don't care how much he hates me, darn him!"

"Never mind, Bill," I said. I understood that Potter had meant only to do his duty; but he was crude and hot-tempered, and I always treated him just as I would have treated a boy. "Maybe you did go at Tom a bit too roughly," I added. Then I addressed the suspect: "You had quarreled with Lewis Terry, hadn't you?" I asked.

"Yes—some."

"Then Bill did have a reason for suspecting you."

"But I didn't consider 'em dangerous quarrels, Mister Morris. We said a few mean things to each other at different times, and once we nearly had a fight with our fists. But that's as far as our trouble went. You know how it is, Mister Morris, we both was sweet on the same girl, and we quarreled over her. She seemed to like

Lewis a lot better'n she liked me, but that didn't keep me from talkin' to her whenever I could."

"You think a great deal of Lillie Boone, then?"

"Yes, I think lots of her."

"Lewis left Lillie about ten o'clock last night," I said. "Where were you between ten and eleven o'clock?"

"I was at home. I proved it this mornin' by my dad and mother, and that's why Bill Potter didn't take me to jail."

I glanced at Potter again. His temper had cooled, and now I thought he looked a bit sheepish.

"I think this feller 'll turn out to be the killer we want," said my deputy, watching me. "He's the one that tried to kill me, too. I'm glad that now we've got enough on him to hold him."

"You ain't got nothin' on me but carryin' a pistol," Tom returned.

"That's all I'm charging you with at present, Griffin," I said.

"I ain't a bit scared of that, Mister Morris. I guess you'll let me tell my dad and mother what's happened, won't you?"

"Certainly," I answered, and turned to my deputy. "Go with him, Bill," I said. "I'm going over to the Terry place, and you can join me there. And don't act so much like you hate Griffin," I added cuttingly, for I felt that a thrust of this sort might be good for Potter.

CHAPTER THREE

AT a wide gate some distance from old Addison Terry's log house, which was a mansion in comparison with most of the houses in the White Oak country, I dismounted and again hitched my horse. As I followed a path that led to the center of a porch, which ran the full width of the building, I noticed that quite a number of persons had gathered to keep the Terrys company.

In the big family room I found old Mr. Terry and his wife, seated side by side, and a number of their friends and acquaintances, some of whom I knew. Addison Terry—"Uncle Ad," as he was called—was a mountaineer of the highest type.

He rose as I entered the room.

"Howdy, Sheriff Morris," he said, shaking hands. "I heard you was amongst us, and I'm mighty glad you're here. I hope, Sheriff Morris"—he paused and in the old man's gray eyes I saw the longing for revenge that was mingled with his sorrow.

"I'll get the killer if I possibly can, Uncle Ad," I promised; then I leaned over to shake hands with his old wife and tell her how much I sympathized with her in this sad hour.

"I guess you want to see Lewis," said Uncle Ad. "He's in thar."

He led the way into an adjoining room and there, on a white bed which sat in the center of the floor, lay the body of his son.

I asked Uncle Ad to close the door so we could be alone, and then I examined the bullet wound which had caused Lewis Terry's death. The bullet had entered his right side, and though it had not gone entirely through his body, a glance told me it could not have come from a gun of small bore—like, for instance, the revolver which Potter had taken from Tom Griffin. It was my opinion that Lewis Terry had been killed with a gun of .41 caliber, or at least a weapon not smaller than a .38.

"Why hasn't the bullet been removed, Uncle Ad?" I inquired. "Potter thinks you've already had it taken out. It's important that I should have it, you know."

"I know it," said the old man, "and I told Potter it'd be out by the time he was back from the county seat. But it couldn't be done that soon. Doctor Henson is a young man without a lot of experience in matters like this, and when he went home after his instruments, away on up Tackett Creek, he found he didn't have the right ones. He come to tell me, though, that he was goin' to Habersham to git the right instruments from another doctor. It's a long ride over thar, but Henson'll be here some time tonight."

"That will be all right," I said. "Where does Henson think the bullet lodged?"

"Under the left armpit, not far from the outside."

"That's my opinion also, Uncle Ad. Now tell me all you know concerning the quarrel between your son and Tom Griffin."

"All I know is that they've had quarrels, Sheriff Morris," Uncle Ad answered. "They was over Lillie Boone, as I guess you already know, and I've got to say that it sure looks like Tom Griffin might 'a' killed Lewis."

"I don't think it was Tom Griffin, Uncle Ad," I broke in gently, for I saw that he was on the verge of going into a rage. "There's something about Tom's attitude, the way he looks, the way he talks when being questioned about the murder—there's something about the fellow that makes me suspect that he may know more about the murder than he has told. I've placed Tom under arrest for carrying a pistol," I added. "It wasn't the sort of weapon that fires a bullet as large as the one that killed your son—though of course that doesn't mean Tom didn't commit the murder. My deputy will be here with Griffin in a little while, Uncle Ad, and I want you to control your feelings. It won't be necessary for you to speak to him."

"Potter is bringin' him here? You're gonna make Tom Griffin look at Lewis?"

"That's it," I answered. "And now about Lillie Boone, Uncle Ad. Is she here?"

"Yes; she's been here since dark—her and Loyd, her brother. The poor gal's bad hurt about this killin'."

"Please send her in, Uncle Ad."

The old man left the room and presently Lillie Boone and a young man entered, closing the door after them. The former was tall and slender, with dark eyes and black hair. The young man, who I supposed was Loyd Boone, resembled the woman only slightly.

"Sheriff Morris, this is Loyd, my brother," said Lillie Boone. "I knowed you wouldn't care fer him hearin' anything you want to ask me about the killin'."

"Certainly not," I answered.

"Anyhow, Sheriff, I've told Bill Potter all I know about Lewis gittin' killed. That wasn't much, except that Lewis had been to see me and that somebody shot him as he was on his way home."

"I'm told that your lover and Tom Griffin quarreled a good deal," I said. "Do you know whether Griffin ever threatened Terry's life?"

"I've never heard that he did. They was jist the sort of quarrels that happen between two men that want the same girl, Mister Morris, and I don't think they was serious enough to make one want to kill the other."

"But those are dangerous kind of quarrels, Miss Boone," I said. "Quarrels brought about by jealousy carry men a long way sometimes."

"Yes, I know; but I don't think the bad blood between Lewis and Tom was pizen enough to cause a killin'. Tom was always tryin' to go with me, and Lewis didn't like him fer that reason, and because Tom told folks he was gonna take me away from Lewis. Tom didn't like Lewis because he couldn't beat his time, and because he claimed Lewis was always throwin' off on him to me. I've always treated Tom right any place I happened to meet him, but I ain't never kept company with him."

"You never discouraged Tom Griffin?"

"I've treated him nice wherever I've seen him—at our house and ever'wheres else," she repeated, and now I thought there was a faint look of defiance in her dark eyes.

"He has called to see you?" I inquired.

"He's stopped to talk whenever I happened to be on the front porch. I—I've thought he's passed the house lots of times when he didn't have to."

"I see," I said, smiling. "And it's hardly in the nature of a pretty girl to resent being admired like that."

Here I was sure her lips twitched slightly, as if she were pleased at my remark.

I said that she did not seem anxious to accuse Tom Griffin of killing her lover. She replied positively that she was not, saying that she did not want to feel that it was Tom who had so treacherously taken Lewis Terry's life.

"Were you alone with Lewis when he left you last night?" I inquired.

"Yes," she said, her eyes widening at my question. "My brother here had gone to bed, and dad and maw wasn't at the house. They was visitin' some of our folks on Poplar Creek."

"Did your father like Lewis?"

"Why, yes—he seemed to."

"Where did you and Lewis part—in the house?"

"No; I went to the gate with him, about a hundred feet from the house. He—he was in a good humor. He was whistlin' as he got on his horse and left."

Here the young woman's brother Loyd spoke for the first time since entering the room.

"If you don't care fer me sayin' somethin', Mister Morris," he began, two gold teeth showing in his wide mouth as he addressed me, "I want to tell you that I don't believe, either, that it was Tom that killed Lewis. I know Tom Griffin about as well as anybody does, and I know he ain't as bad as he's painted."

"Perhaps you can tell me, Loyd," I said, "the name of some other person who might have hated Terry."

"I'm sorry I can't, Sheriff." Loyd's bright black eyes were looking straight into my face, and his expression was that of a man who is deeply sincere. "Lewis Terry was purty bad atter licker, especially away from home," he stated. "He was purty mean and bad-tempered when he had licker in him, and he could 'a' made enemies that me er Lillie er his folks never knowed about."

"That's right, Loyd, of course," I said. Then I told Lillie and her brother that Potter and I had placed Tom Griffin under arrest; that presently Potter would bring him to the house, and that I intended to test the prisoner's nerve by the body of the man of whom he had been so jealous.

I was sure Lillie Boone grew pale and that her brother looked startled. Both stared at me.

"But he's charged only with carrying a pistol," I added, and at once the girl and her brother appeared more or less relieved. They listened closely while I went on to tell of the close call which Potter had experienced on the ridge near the scene of Lewis's death, and of the circumstances leading up to Griffin's arrest.

As I left the room with Lillie Boone and her brother to mingle with the folks in other parts of the house I remember thinking it was time Potter should be putting in an appearance with the prisoner. I was anxious to note just how Tom Griffin and Lillie Boone would look and act on seeing each other.

CHAPTER FOUR

HALF an hour later a man came in to tell me Bill Potter was outside. I went to the porch and told my deputy and the prisoner to come into the house. I was a pace or two behind Potter and Tom Griffin as we entered the big family room, and over Tom's shoulder I had a good view of Lillie and Loyd Boone, who were standing near the door to the room occupied by the body of Lewis Terry. I noticed that at sight of Tom Griffin Lillie Boone gave an almost imperceptible start, and I thought that in his walk Tom Griffin hesitated for the fraction of a second.

Bill Potter and his prisoner paused in the center of the room, apparently to await further orders from me, and as they stood there Bill Potter glared about exactly as if he were looking for somebody else to place under arrest.

I drew Potter aside and whispered to him that I thought we'd better let Griffin off with a fine for carrying a pistol. At this my deputy looked greatly surprised, then angry. But I smiled at his frown.

"I don't think he'll skip," I said. "I'm anxious to see if he will."

"I know he will," said Potter emphatically. "I think we've got the killer, Sheriff."

"I don't think so," I replied. "At least, Tom didn't kill Terry with the gun you took from him. I've examined the body, and I'm sure Terry was killed with a bullet of about .41 caliber."

"Yes, I noticed that, too. But that don't prove nothin'. Anyhow, Tom Griffin is the critter that shot a hole through my hat."

"That may be, Potter, but we'd have a sweet time making sure of it. When Tom Griffin told us he had been over on Tackett Creek, he evidently felt he could establish an alibi. It's possible that it would be a false alibi; I don't doubt that, and at present we haven't the time to find out. I do know I'd rather have Tom over here than in jail at the county-seat. I think he knows something about the murder, and it's to our interest that he should remain where we can get at him while this investigation is going on. I feel rather sure he won't try to leave this section. That's why I'm going to give him a chance to pay his fine for carrying a pistol."

"And he'll be heading fer a hidin' place ten minutes after we let him go," said my deputy.

"We'll risk that, Potter," I returned. "Doesn't Squire Snyder live on the road between here and your house?"

"Yes, about a mile from here."

"All right; I'll spend the night with you, and on our way to your place we'll stop at Snyder's and settle this little matter about Tom. We'll take him in for a look at the body, but I don't expect him to be greatly affected."

With a frown my deputy motioned at the prisoner, whose small dark eyes had watched us as we whispered together, and the three of us entered the room which held the dead man. I closed the door behind us.

"Now, you pizen critter," Potter began, starting his rough stuff again, "go over thar and cast your peepers at the man you shot down."

"Never mind that, Potter," I said quickly. Then, as Potter frowned down at his big feet, I addressed Tom Griffin:

"What kind of a gun did you kill Terry with, Tom?" I inquired.

Tom looked at me and bared his teeth in a grim smile.

"No kind of a gun, Mister Morris," he replied.

As Potter and I watched him he walked up to the bed and boldly drew back the sheet which covered the dead man. Then he straightened his shoulders, folded his muscular arms on his chest, and gazed calmly down at the cold and rigid features on the white pillow. For two or three minutes he remained like that, perfectly motionless and without expression; then he slowly lifted his head, leveled his keen little eyes at Bill Potter's homely face, and allowed a smile to break at the corners of his wide mouth.

"Well, what next?" he inquired.

"Look at the wound that killed Lewis," I said.

Tom did so, thoughtfully but calmly.

"And after seein' this wound," he said, lifting his brows at me, "Bill Potter acted tonight jist like I killed Lewis Terry with my pistol. Well, well! Mister Morris, you've sure got a smart deputy! Why, any fool would know my pistol wouldn't make a wound like this. And the pistol I had tonight is the only gun I've got of any kind."

Potter looked perplexed. He puckered his forehead and lifted a hand to scratch his ear.

"I didn't mean what you're tryin' to pretend," he said. "You could 'a' laid hands on another gun somewheres. I think you did, too."

Griffin sneered at Potter's words as he replaced the sheet over the body.

Lillie and Loyd Boone, their heads together, were standing at a window when we again entered the family room. No one was very near them, and apparently they were whispering together. When they saw us they left off whatever it was they were discussing and I thought they each gave Tom Griffin a searching look. Then they withdrew to another part of the house.

I stayed at Uncle Ad Terry's house an hour longer, waiting for young Doctor Henson; but at the end of that time he had not arrived, and so, giving Uncle Ad a verbal message for him, which had to do with the safeguarding of the bullet that he was to remove from Lewis's body, I left with Potter and Tom Griffin.

On our way to the home of my deputy, who lived perhaps two miles from the Terrys, we stopped at Squire Snyder's house. There a warrant was made out for Tom Griffin and he was fined for carrying a re-

volver. The fine was pretty heavy, but Tom was able to pay it.

CHAPTER FIVE

EARLY the following morning found Potter and me again at Uncle Ad Terry's, where preparations were being made for the burial of Lewis Terry's remains, which were to be placed in the family cemetery not far from the house.

Uncle Ad met us on the porch with the announcement that Doctor Henson had arrived in the middle of the night. I was introduced to Henson in the family room, and I recalled having seen him once or twice before. He was a heavily-built young man with a likable-looking face. He was new to his profession, and at this moment he was plainly worried.

"I don't seem able to find the bullet without butchering the body, Sheriff Morris," he said with a tired gesture. "I believe it's behind an upper rib. I sent to the county-seat for Doctor Hooper about four o'clock this morning, and I'm expecting him at any time. We'll get the bullet for you as soon as possible."

"That will be all right, Doctor," I replied. "The bullet may prove an important factor in helping us to find the guilty party, and it may not. I'm anxious to see it."

I then took Potter to the porch and told him we had better continue our search for a clue at the scene of the tragedy—the search which had been so rudely interrupted by the unknown person who seemed bent on taking my deputy's life.

It took us only a few minutes to reach the cliff above the spot where Lewis Terry had fallen from his horse. And we had been there hardly more than a minute before Bill Potter found something which he had overlooked the preceding day. It was a slender piece of wire about five inches in length, and it lay under a pine bush near the edge of the little cliff.

"I wonder!" Potter exclaimed, picking it up. He stared at it a moment, then handed it to me. "Here, Sheriff, take a look."

I examined it carefully. An inch or so of one end of it looked as if it had been filed, making this part of it keener than the rest. I bent the two ends of the wire toward each other, leaving them perhaps half an inch apart. Then I held the little object out between a thumb and forefinger. It was a common wire hairpin!

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Potter cried. "You reckon it could 'a' been the gal, after all?" and Potter's blue eyes widened. "Reckon it might 'a' been Lillie Boone?"

"Let's not jump at things. I suppose a number of people have been here since the killing."

"Not up here, I guess," said Potter. "A lot of folks have tramped aroun' down thar on the trail, but I doubt if anybody has been up here but us. Not any women, anyway. You don't carry hairpins, I guess, and I don't," he added. "Well, then, I guess it was up here afore the shot was fired. All right; who left it here? Lewis Terry had been callin' on Lillie Boone."

"You were sure Tom Griffin did the killing, Potter, but now you seem ready to accuse the young woman who was Terry's sweetheart," I said, smiling. "You're inconsistent, Potter."

"A feller's mind has got to change as the evidence changes," said Potter defensively. "Besides, to tell you the fact, I ain't never been as sure Tom did the killin' as I am that it was him that shot at me. You've got to admit, Sheriff," he declared, "that it seems queer that this hairpin would be here."

"It does, Potter, for a truth. But you didn't find the tracks of a woman's shoes up here, did you?"

"No, that's right." Potter scratched his head thoughtfully. "Jist a few tracks of a man's shoes. Thar's the print of his heel, I think, right thar by that bush," and Potter pointed. "It might, though, be yours er mine. I've forgot jist where I saw the tracks. They wasn't plain, and I knowed they wouldn't mean nothin'."

"About Lillie Boone," I began. "She is supposed to have loved Lewis, I understand. There was no reason, then, for her to kill him."

"I don't know about that. They might 'a' quarreled, and he might 'a' told her he was leavin' her fer good. Women have killed men fer things like that. After he started away, she could 'a' got holt of a gun and put on a pair of her brother's er her dad's shoes, and then took the path acrost the ridge. She would 'a' had plenty of time to git here, even if Lewis was ridin', and it was such a light night that she could 'a' easy killed him from off the cliff. It looks strange, Mister Morris, this hairpin does. Men ain't got no use fer hairpins, but some women carry a handful in their hair. See, Sheriff, Lillie Boone could 'a' lost one of her hairpins here. This looks strange."

I pondered a moment. There was some logic in my deputy's crudely put reasoning, but he seemed to have forgotten one thing, and this was that the hairpin had been straightened out by the person who left it on the cliff. Then, too, Potter had failed to notice that one end of it had been filed.

But I did not call his attention to these two facts. I put the object of discussion safely away in my match pocket.

"Let's not jump at things, Potter," I said again. "Knowing no more than we know, we have only the right to wonder if Lillie was connected in any way with the murder. It seems, from all we have learned so far, that they parted as lovers usually part."

"That's jist what she says," Potter replied. "We don't know it to be a fact."

"But we must take her statement as truth until we have sufficient reason to believe it's false," I returned. "I feel, though," I added, "that the person who killed Terry followed this path from the other side of the ridge."

"And that lets Tom Griffin out, does it?"

"No, not entirely out. It's possible Tom Griffin was near Lillie Boone's home on the night of the murder, and it's possible he followed the path across the ridge."

"He must have, of course, if he was on foot. But what do you mean, Sheriff?"

"I think Tom knows more than he has told us."

"I'm plum' ready to think that. Jist how do you figure it out?"

"Evidently, Potter, you didn't notice a very secretive something about Tom when he was with us, and it is just as evident that you failed to notice how Lillie and Loyd acted in Tom's presence. Lillie looked at Tom with a question-mark on her face, and Loyd, so to speak, frowned a question at him."

"Ah-ha!" my deputy cried tragically. "I begin to see! Lillie and Loyd know Tom was over thar, and they think it was him that killed Lewis, but fer some reason er other they ain't accused him yet. I see! And they're thinkin' right, I guess. It must 'a' been Tom Griffin that killed him, after all."

"Wait a minute, Potter," I said, and I was hardly able to suppress a laugh. "Don't forget this hairpin, and that just now you were trying to make me see that Lillie was a most likely suspect. Then, too, can't you understand that it would be a very natural thing for Lillie to tell on Tom if she thought he killed Lewis? What's the matter with you, Potter? You're ready to accuse anybody and everybody, aren't you? I said Griffin *may* have been near Lillie's home, and I said it only because Lillie, Loyd and Tom seemed to be hiding something. I may be entirely wrong."

"Darn it!" said Potter, scratching his head again. "I'm jist stumblin' aroun', Sheriff Morris."

"Don't stumble so much," I advised.

"Why don't you say jist what you think?" Potter inquired, frowning.

"Because I don't know just what I think," I answered, "or what all I think."

My deputy was facing a small pine tree. This tree had been directly behind him when, the day before, his hat was shot from his head.

Suddenly Potter threw out a long arm, then leaped forward excitedly.

"Look here!" he cried, touching the tree with a long forefinger. "Here's where the bullet hit when that critter shot my hat off yesterday. Well, I'll be darned! And the bullet's in here," he declared. "Now I'll

see if I was bein' shot at with a gun like I took off of Tom Griffin."

He drew a big knife from his pocket, opened it with his tobacco-stained teeth, and began to cut around the spot where the bullet had buried itself into the little pine. He worked hard and feverishly for several minutes, his blue eyes glittering. He was so eager that his hands trembled. I suppose it seemed to him that he would never reach the bullet.

I watched him anxiously; and as I watched I did some hard thinking, for I felt sure it would be the sort of bullet which Potter expected to find.

Finally he stopped, peered narrowly at the place where he had been cutting and digging, and then gave a loud grunt of satisfaction. Another gouge from the long blade, and a slender bullet rolled out and fell into the palm of Potter's left hand.

"A long .32 bullet!" he cried. "Jist as I thought! It come from Tom Griffin's pistol as sure's two and two's four! And now to the pen he goes fer shootin' with the intention to kill!"

"Go easy, Potter," I said. "Not so fast, and think a bit as you move along. It may have been Tom that shot at you—I guess it was—but it would take you a long time to convict him on this slender evidence. We'll *threaten* to arrest him for shooting at you if he doesn't talk; threaten to pen him if he doesn't tell us what we want to know, and if it was Tom that shot at you, you can just bet your life that, to save himself, he'll be glad to tell all he knows on everybody else. Do you follow me?"

Potter was silent a moment. He frowned and pawed the ground with a big foot.

"Tom Griffin tried to kill me, Sheriff," he said, "but I'm takin' your orders."

"Very well, Potter," I returned. "And now listen," I added. "I'm going over to have a talk with Lillie and Loyd Boone all by my lonesome. You go back to Uncle Ad's and keep your eyes peeled. Take charge of the bullet as soon as the doctors get it for us, and stick around there till I come for you."

My real reason for getting rid of Potter was a fear that he might take a sudden notion to draw a pair of handcuffs on Lillie Boone. Potter was a good officer when it came to arresting a desperate law-breaker whose guilt was already established; but when the solving of a mystery was the issue, I'm afraid he was a bit too crude in his methods.

A moment after we started off in opposite directions I called Potter back to ask him for the bullet he had taken from the pine tree. He handed it to me without comment.

CHAPTER SIX

I FOLLOWED the path which, leaving the trail at the spot where Lewis Terry was killed, entered the trail again on the opposite side of the ridge. Just east of the latter end of the path a log house sat in a small clearing, and since there were no other houses in sight, I knew it must be the home of John Boone, the father of Lillie and Loyd Boone.

The front gate, as Lillie had already informed me, was about a hundred feet from the house. When I reached this gate I saw Lillie and her brother sitting on the porch apparently engaged in an earnest discussion. They both got to their feet quickly when they caught sight of me, and as I approached I lifted a hand in a friendly good-morning gesture.

"Hello," I said, halting at the edge of the porch. "Still keeping house by yourselves?"

"Still by ourselves," Loyd answered. "We're expectin' maw and dad in time to go to Lewis Terry's funeral. How are you this mornin', Mister Morris?"

"Fine, thank you," I answered; "but I'm a whole lot puzzled about this murder," I told him. "A whole lot puzzled."

Loyd and his sister looked at me inquiringly.

"I guess so," said Loyd. "It's a puzzlin' matter, I reckon."

"It's absolutely nothing else," I returned. "I don't think I'd be so badly puzzled, though, if some of the folks around here

had been more truthful with me. For instance, Miss Boone"—and here I looked narrowly at the young woman—"you misled me when you said last night that Lewis Terry wasn't drinking when he was killed."

At this the young woman bit her lip, and I thought her dark eyes gleamed a little.

"I don't see what you mean, Sheriff."

"No? Well, I'll make it clear to you," I said coldly. "I'm going to tell you and Loyd something that I haven't told even my deputy," I lied—for sometimes an officer must meet lies with lies. "Uncle Ad didn't tell me his son was drinking when he was killed—ashamed of it, maybe—but I suspected it strongly, and I learned the truth by examining the clothes he wore when he met his death. Uncle Ad's hired girl showed me where they were, and when I looked at them I found that his coat was scented with whisky. I suppose a bottle broke in his pocket when he fell from his horse. Anyhow, this fact of Terry's having been drinking was kept even from Bill Potter. For Bill didn't tell me that the pieces of a bottle were on the body when he reached it, nor did Bill notice that Terry's clothes smelled like whisky. I suppose Bill was pretty badly excited."

I made my "guesswork" about the whisky-scented clothes, which I hadn't thought of till this moment, as convincing as I could, and I was quick to note that the lie worked. Lillie grew red and then pale. Then I knew Lewis Terry had been drinking when he lost his life.

"He must 'a' had two bottles, then," said Lillie, "fer he emptied one while he was here, in spite of all I could do. I—I hated to tell you he was drinkin', Mister Morris. I knew, though, that I ought to 'a' told you the truth."

"No doubt a good deal of truth has been kept from me," I replied, trying to put at least a faint threat in my voice. "I intend to place somebody under arrest," I declared. "I will try not to make the mistake of arresting the wrong party."

Here Lillie and Loyd glanced at each other. Loyd moved his feet nervously. He was frowning.

I was frowning, too, but I was nevertheless greatly pleased. The inspiration that had caused me to resort to a falsehood had certainly changed the looks of things considerably.

"What else can either of you tell me?" I asked.

"Wait a miute, Mister Morris," said Loyd suddenly. "I want to speak to Lillie about somethin', if you don't mind."

"Go right ahead," I returned, understanding that he wanted a private talk with Lillie. "I'm in no hurry whatever."

Loyd jerked his head backward, and his sister followed him into the house. They were gone probably ten minutes. When they came back to the porch again it was Lillie who addressed me.

"Mister Morris, I've decided to tell you somethin' else that I didn't tell you last night," she began. "I hated to tell you Tom Griffin was over here night afore last, jist afore Lewis left me, fer I didn't want to think, er have anybody else think, Tom would 'a' killed Lewis. I ain't sayin' now that Tom done it; me er Loyd either can't believe Tom's the killer; but it's a fact that he was over here. And it looks bad fer him, I know; it looks plum' bad. I didn't tell even Loyd about this till this mornin', and when I did tell him, he told me I ought to 'a' told you last night. Loyd, you see," she explained as an after thought, "was in bed when I saw Tom the night Lewis was killed."

"And so Griffin's parents lied when they told my deputy Tom was at home on the night of the murder," I said warmly. "Lied for him at his suggestion, hey? Well, I wondered about that. But make yourself more clear, Miss Boone," I added. "Do you mean Tom was over here talking to you and Lewis?"

"Oh, no; I don't think Lewis seen Tom Griffin, and I ain't sure Tom knows that I seen him. Lewis and me was standin' on the porch, you see, a few minutes afore Lewis left. Lewis wasn't facin' the road out yonder, but I was, and while me and Lewis was talkin' I seen Tom pass. The moon was bright, and I could easy recognize Tom by his walk and his shape. I didn't say nothin' to Lewis about Tom

bein' aroun'. They was a lot jealous of each other, and I didn't want to start trouble."

"Could you tell me whether Tom looked toward you and Lewis?"

"I think he did. I'm purty sure he did."

"But he didn't stop in the trail, of course?"

"No, he didn't stop."

"Were you afraid he'd stop?"

"Not much. I didn't hardly know what to think. He had passed here lots in the daytime, talkin' to me ever' chance he got, but he hadn't never been aroun' here at night as I knowed of."

I pondered. I remembered how she had looked at Griffin in Uncle Ad Terry's big family room, and now I thought that she might have been wondering at that time whether Tom Griffin had lingered near her home until Lewis Terry left. And had her brother, too, been uncertain about the same thing? Was that why he had frowned at Griffin?

"I can't hardly believe Tom would 'a' killed Lewis," Lillie added. "But Loyd showed me it was my duty to tell all I knowed. Law is law, made to pertect folks —Lewis Terry was my lover."

"I thank you, Miss Boone," I said. "And now I'm going over to have another little talk with Tom Griffin. As you say, things look bad for him. Things look tremendously bad for him."

As on the day before, I hitched my horse near the scene of the tragedy. I hurried back across the ridge, and in a little while I had reached the Griffin place, had marched Tom into the scrubby-looking apple orchard, where we would not be disturbed, and was facing him accusingly.

"Tom Griffin," I said sternly, "why did you deny that you were near Lillie's home on the night of the tragedy?"

Tom stared at me wide-eyed. He grew pale.

"Because it was the truth," he answered. "I wasn't over there."

"I think you were, Tom. I have just come from there, and I have Lillie Boone's word that you passed her house just before Lewis left her."

"She told you that?" Tom cried. "I don't believe it!"

"She recognized you, Tom. She knows it was you that passed along the trail."

"I reckon you're tryin' to do some guessin', Sheriff Morris. This is one of your bluffs. But it won't make me tell you I was somewheres when I wasn't."

"Listen to me, Tom," I said, prepared to argue with him, "Lillie Boone is a good girl, no doubt, but she isn't worth your while. She'll never care greatly for you—never. She's the sort that might love a man one week and never think of him again. She'll be falling in and out of love all her life. I don't think she was sincere in what she seemed to think of Lewis Terry. Anyhow, Tom Griffin, she knows that *you* love her, and yet I am sure that she wants to make it appear that you killed Lewis Terry. I don't think you did, Tom, and I suppose she knows you didn't. But she told me you were over there on the night of the murder, and her reason for telling me is plain enough: she wants me to suspect you as the murderer. Can't you see that, Tom? She wouldn't protect you even for a minute, if in protecting you she might in some way injure herself. So why not come on through with whatever it is you've been hiding?"

Tom's black eyes glittered. He drew a long breath.

"She tried to make you think I killed Lewis? She said she thought that?"

"That's what she meant, Tom. Her object in saying you were over there was unmistakable."

Tom was silent. He looked down at his feet frowning.

"Well, anyhow, I wasn't over thar," he declared after a moment. "I ain't got nothin' to say about Lillie, except that she told you a lie."

"Now, see here, Tom," I flared at him, "you know something that I should know. I don't want to treat you rough, but you've got to tell me what you're hidin, and I want you to talk right now." Here I took from my pocket the bullet which Potter had cut from the tree. "This came from a pistol like yours," I said, and I went on to ex-

plain how it happened to be in my possession. "Shortly after somebody tried to kill Potter in the woods," I went on, "we caught you with a pistol that had been fired a little while before—a pistol, as I said, that shoots a bullet like this. I'll leave it to your judgment, Tom, whether you could be sent to the penitentiary for shooting with the intention to kill. And now will you talk? Will you talk now, Tom Griffin, or do you still say you have nothing to tell me?"

That settled it. Tom was badly frightened; and perhaps, too, he felt bitter toward Lillie Boone for having said things that were evidently spoken solely for the purpose of having him accused of murder. Anyhow, he told me a story. He could not tell me who killed Lewis Terry, but he related some very interesting things.

And when he finished I handed him the bullet which Bill Potter had cut from the pine tree. He took it so eagerly that, had there remained a doubt in my mind as to who shot at my deputy, it would have vanished at once.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON my way back to the Boone place I rode by Uncle Ad Terry's to get my deputy. He was standing by the big gate some distance from the house when I came up.

"Well, what do you know, Sheriff?" he asked, looking inquisitive.

"That I'm expecting interesting happenings," I answered evasively. "Have they got the bullet yet?"

"Yes." Potter stepped up to my horse and handed me a lead ball that was almost perfectly round. "Look at this, Sheriff. Darned if I was ever more surprised in my life."

"I thought sure Lewis was shot with a big pistol," I said. "Well, get your horse, Potter, and come on."

As we rode toward the Boone place my deputy tried to draw me out; but I was thinking deeply, and I knew it would do no harm to let his questions wait. I felt that before long his curiosity as to what I had learned would be answered fully.

This time we followed the trail around the end of the ridge and dismounted near the log house of the Boones. Loyd and Lillie must have seen us through a window, for as we passed through the gate they both came out on the porch. As we drew near I saw that both of them were pale, and I knew that fear was in their hearts.

When Potter and I paused at the edge of the porch facing Lillie and her brother I spoke the first thought that entered my mind.

Miss Boone, I suppose you feel sure now that Tom Griffin did remain near your house till Lewis Terry left," I said. "In order to make me think Tom was guilty of murder, and to divert suspicion, you took a chance that Tom was not near this house when Lewis left you. If you had felt sure Tom had lingered around here and saw what occurred as Lewis was about to leave, you certainly wouldn't have told me Tom Griffin was over here."

"I don't understan' you, Sheriff Morris," said the young woman, her voice quavering a little. "How would it 'a' mattered so much to me, Tom not stayin' aroun' here?"

"You've already guessed what I mean, Miss Boone, but I'll explain," I answered. "If you had been sure that Tom saw what occurred as Lewis was about to leave you wouldn't have tried to throw suspicion upon Tom, for the simple reason that you would have known that when he was confronted by me he would have a story of his own to tell. And as a matter of fact, Miss Boone, Tom did stick around, and he saw just what happened. I'll tell you the story Tom told me.

"Early on the night of the tragedy," I began, "Griffin was searching for some of his father's cattle. He happened to be near the trail when Lewis Terry came along, and he noticed that Lewis was drinking—saw Lewis take a drink from a bottle, and saw how Lewis swayed in the saddle. Thinking that Lewis Terry was coming to see you, Tom took the notion to try to learn how you would treat your lover when he was drunk; he entertained the hope, in fact, that you would quit Terry. So he followed Terry here and stuck around as long as Terry did, and a little longer. He

did stroll along the trail, as you stated, while you and Lewis were standing on the porch, just before Lewis left you. But you didn't tell me, Miss Boone, that you and your lover were quarreling. Tom Griffin did, and it seemed to him like a pretty bad quarrel. So he hid some distance from the gate to listen and watch. Presently he saw you and Lewis come to the gate, and there you and your lover continued the quarrel, which had to do with his coming to see you while he was drunk. After you had stood at the gate a moment or two Terry lost control of himself at something you said and shook and slapped you. This caused you to cry out in pain, and then your brother Loyd came running from the house. He wore his shoes, trousers and coat, and that seems to prove—contrary to your statement to me—that Loyd had not gone to bed, or at least that he was not in bed when you and Lewis left the porch. Anyhow, he rushed up to the gate and hit at Lewis Terry. At this Terry uttered an oath and knocked Loyd down; and when Loyd struggled to his feet, Terry stepped forward and knocked him down again. Then, after a few more oaths, Lewis Terry unhitched his horse from the fence and rode away.

"That was what Tom Griffin witnessed, Miss Boone," I added. "As you and your brother went into the house Tom left his hiding place and started across the ridge. He was on the other side of the ridge, several hundred yards from where Terry was killed, when he heard a shot—the shot, of course, that killed your lover. And now, folks, this is the question I want answered: Who killed Lewis Terry?"

I produced the wire hairpin and the round bullet and held them out in the palm of my hand. During a still but dramatic moment the four of us looked at the little objects. Then I said:

"When Potter found this hairpin on the cliff where the person stood that killed Lewis Terry I was at a loss to know why it was there, for it was straightened out and one end of it had been filed down, and that was sufficient proof that it had not fallen from a woman's hair. But when Potter handed me this round bullet, which was taken from Lewis Terry's body this morning, I was at once able to establish a connection between it and the hairpin. When I left Tom Griffin a little while ago I knew that one of two persons had killed Terry, but I didn't know what sort of gun he had been killed with till I saw this bullet. I remembered then that persons who hunt with a 'hog rifle' sometimes carry a needle, or a very keen wire, to use in cleaning out the tubes; that is, to prevent the tube from becoming clogged with burned powder or dust. The tube of the 'hog rifle' that killed Lewis Terry was cleaned just before the shot was fired; cleaned with this wire in my hand. The person that killed Terry wanted to be very sure that the rifle would not miss fire."

"Do you own a 'hog rifle'?" I inquired.

Loyd moistened his lips with his tongue. He nervously lifted a hand to his chin.

"Yes," he said hoarsely.

I turned to Lillie Boone. Her dark eyes were watching me fearfully.

"Miss Boone, you surely didn't love Lewis Terry nearly so well as folks believed," I said frankly. "If you had you would have prevented your brother from killing him, even if Terry did slap you in a drunken rage. Or was it Loyd that killed him?" I added quickly. "Maybe it was yourself, Miss Boone."

"No, it was me," said Loyd Boone. "I killed him, Mister Morris. I didn't know till atter I'd shot Lewis Terry that Tom Griffin had been prowlin' aroun' here; didn't have any idee anybody might 'a' seen Lewis hit me. I didn't think of nothin' like that. And Lillie, she didn't try to stop me; she was as mad as I was, and she had a right to be." Loyd's eyes gleamed brightly and he lifted his voice. "He abused my sister, and he knocked me down twice when I tried to pertect her. It made me so mad I couldn't use any reason, and so I got my rifle and went and killed the drunken dog!"

"I thought it was you, Loyd," I smiled. "And no jury in this section will convict you for protecting your sister from a drunken brute. As a matter of form I'll have to arrest you, though. Come along, Loyd."

And I led him away, followed by Bill Potter.

Very Nearly Perfect

By NOBLE WELLBORN HUNT

IT was very nearly a perfect crime—but not quite. In fact, it seemed as one studied it to have been entirely a perfect crime. One could discover no fault in its design or execution—unless it be reckoned a fault that the perpetrator was caught in less than forty-eight hours. However, that was clearly because the detective was stupid, too utterly devoid of imagination, too utterly unappreciative to recognize that this was a crime so out of the ordinary that his usual plodding routine methods could by no possibility succeed—and so he used them. But the stupidity of the detective can in no way detract from the credit due to the brain that devised the plan for the crime. It was almost a perfect plan.

Of course if Alice Deane had disliked him it would not have happened. If she had been merely indifferent to him it would not have happened; but she was not indifferent to him, and she certainly did not dislike him. Her arms were about his neck and her head was on his breast when she told him of her engagement to Brainerd. Nor were the head or the arms strangers to those places. And she told him many other things after she told him about Brainerd—and before—things that filled Colby with a mad joy, and a mad despair, and a consuming anger, and sent him out into the night bewildered and drunk with emotion to walk the streets till morning.

During that walk the thought of killing Brainerd came to him. In the early dawn he took the idea home to his rooms to work it out into a plan. He put all his ingenuity into the plan, and his ingenuity was great. Ask any of the engineers who had to compete with the machines he designed. Yes, John Colby had ingenuity—as much as any man in the automobile field—and that's enough! And the plan he worked out was like the engines he designed, noiseless, flexible, cool.

The place must be in a crowd, a moving crowd, where approach and retreat can be unnoticed. The weapon must be a knife, certain, noiseless, driven home with a movement that is such a matter of course in the crowd as to be for the observers no movement. The knife must be one not traceable to him. It would be so easy and simple that he laughed as he thought of the bewilderment of the police and the press. Then Alice, would she know at once that he had done it? Well, she likely would. But Colby recalled in detail all she had told him the night before—all about her quick infatuation for Brainerd, her engagement, of that mad night when passion had been too much for her; of her gradual awakening to the brutality of the man; of his refusal to release her, his making a virtue of his willingness to marry her under the circumstances; then of his holding over her that he could prove the facts about that night and that she dared not have him prove them to that frantic puritan old couple in a New Hampshire village who laid themselves down at evening only after each had said a prayer that she be kept from the dangers and temptations of the great city. He recalled all this, and felt that if she guessed, his justification would be as complete and automatic and matter-of-course in her mind as it was in his own. He could be sure of Alice. She would understand. Alice was wonderful. She would never speak of it, even to him. That was her way, to take for granted the big things and to know he understood, to know when speech spoils things

As for the others—was he not John Colby? And had he not thought it out? He had to do four things: see Brainerd so that he would be able to recognize him, study his habits so as to be able to find him in the right sort of crowd, procure a knife suited to the work, practice with it till he could strike the blow in the proper way. None of them was likely to take much time.

That he had never seen Brainerd helped greatly. It was strange that he had never encountered the man when calling on Alice, but it was fortunate. No point of contact between them would be found, no motive suspected. No one knew of Colby's relations with Alice Deane. He believed very few knew of her engagement to Brainerd. He would lie entirely outside the range of suspicion.

As to the second thing to be done, every resident of a great city must frequent some crowded place; he need but watch a little. And then the knife—he had an idea where he could get it easily, and he had conceived a blow, an upward stroke of the right forearm, the elbow almost stationary, the thumb on the knifeblade—he had read of its somewhere. He rose and practiced it a few times to clarify his image of it. It was evidently just the thing; it could be made very effective, and it would be altogether unnoticeable. Oh, the plan would work. It couldn't fail.

And Alice would be free! Free for him—free from the dread she could not escape while Brainerd lived, even though she married him!

A huge ferryboat ran into its slip. The piles bent and creaked as it scraped its way to the landing, where the apron was already half lowered. The front of the boat was jammed as usual with people eager to be the first up the incline. The boat jammed against the pier, the deckhands threw the hawsers over the cleats, the aprons rattled on the deck, the guard-rope fell, and the crowd surged up the slope as a wave rolls up the beach. Suddenly there was a commotion; a woman screamed, some men shouted, a few of those who had passed looked back and saw that a knot of people had gathered just off the end of the apron, and that it was growing. Most of those who turned to look hurried on after a moment of speculation as to the probable cause of the excitement, a few turned back. The policeman on duty in the passage leading to the street hurried down the slope.

Newspaper extras were out in an hour. Colby bought one as he stepped out of an elevator on his way to keep an appointment. He had read the headlines as he walked along. Ralph Brainerd had been stabbed in the crowd leaving a ferryboat. No one had seen the deed. There was no clue to the murderer. This much the lines revealed. Colby stuck the paper in his pocket. Later, while he waited for Thompson to dispose of a visitor who was with him in the inner office, he read the meager first account. The man had been seen to fall. Several people had tried to help him up. Their names were given, as were the names of a number of others who had in various ways come to the notice of the reporters. Three or four of the names were of people Colby knew.

The late evening papers carried columns of stuff about "The Ferry Mystery." There were pictures of the victim, of the scene of the crime, of the captain of the ferryboat, of the knife, which had been left sticking in the side of the murdered man; there were conjectures as to the perpetrator, his motive, method, and so on. The most favored view was that Brainerd had detected a pickpocket at work and had been stabbed by the crook. Colby read the story in several of the papers while he smoked his after-dinner cigar; then he went to the theatre.

"The Central Office" put McMurtree on the case. McMurtree is what is called officially a detective and colloquially a plain-clothes man. He went at the work assigned him as he did at every task, in the ordinary routine way. He saw the policeman who had been on duty at the ferry, the gateman, the officers of the ferryboat, the deckhands, the people who were named as having been on the spot. He listened to their stories. He asked some questions. Mostly the people had nothing to tell. None had information that promised to be of use. Mo-

Murtree's questions usually elicited nothing but amplifications of useless details.

One question was different. He asked it of every one he interviewed, and he carefully wrote down the answers. It was:

"Did you see any one you know among the crowd?"

After he had completed this work—it took him until late afternoon of the day following the murder—he went back to the office. There he learned of a new development and hurried away to another interview.

John Colby awoke on the second morning after his crime at the usual time. He dressed as usual, leisurely and carefully, and went to breakfast at the little café where he generally ate. He read the paper. The murder at the ferry still held the first page, but there were no facts. This and that conjecture was laboriously enlarged to fill space. McMurtree had been "interviewed." His contribution to the understanding of the case consisted of two words:

"Nothin' doin'."

Colby smoked a cigarette and then walked back to his room.

A large man with a long upper lip was waiting in the corridor. As Colby inserted his key in the lock the man stepped up and with just a trace of the accent that ought to go with the lip, he asked:

"Is this Mr. Colby?"

"That is my name."

"I'm Detective McMurtree from Police Headquarters."

Colby almost felt the manacles on his wrists; he imagined he lay in a cell awaiting trial; he felt that he stood at the bar and pleaded guilty; he could see himself in the death chair and feel them bind on the electrodes. There had been only a slight hesitation before he answered the officer:

"Yes. What can I do for you, Mr. McMurtree?"

"Why, I think I'll just step inside with you, if you can spare me a minute."

Colby opened the door and waved the detective in before him, saying:

"Take a seat, please," and as McMurtree complied he sat down also and waited.

"Mr. Colby, I've been detailed to look into the killing of Ralph Brainerd at the ferryboat day before yesterday."

"Yes?"

"Well, Mr. Colby, I'd like to tell you some things I've found out."

"Yes?"

"Yes. I got from the witnesses a lot of names of people who were in the crowd. Yours was one."

"Quite likely. I crossed on that boat, and I heard some commotion. I looked back and saw a crowd gathering, but I did not return to see what it was about."

"No, you naturally wouldn't." This with no apparently hidden meaning, just as one might say, "You're not one of the vulgarly curious." Then abruptly:

"Do you know Thomas Atchly?"

Colby's "Yes, quite well," was coolly given, fast as his pulse was racing.

"Atchly saw the picture of the dagger in the *Express* and came to the station to see it," said the detective. "He has a collection of weapons, I understand."

"Yes, a large one," admitted Colby.

"He says he had one like that found in Brainerd. When he saw the picture, he went to look at his dagger, and found it had disappeared. He says he remembers handling it about a week ago. I went to see him last night. He says the dagger at the station is exactly like his except that it has been sharpened, very carefully sharpened. He had no identifying mark on his dagger, but he feels pretty sure it is the one we have."

A long pause. Colby said nothing. McMurtree went on:

"I showed Atchly the list of persons seen near the scene of the murder. He said one of them had visited him last Wednesday, the day after he remembers having seen the dagger in its place in his collection. You are the person, Mr. Colby."

"I was at Atchly's Wednesday evening," admitted Colby coolly.

McMurtree obviously waited for something more, but Colby merely looked at him expectantly, so he went on:

"Last night I saw Mr. Brainerd's secretary, and learned some details of Brain-

erd's private life. He was engaged to be married."

"Yes?"

"Yes. To Miss Alice Deane."

Colby semed to wince slightly, but he did not speak. McMurtree continued:

"I went to the Kennard Apartments where Miss Deane lives and talked to the hall boy. There was only one person on the ferryboat list I told you of who had ever called on Miss Deane. That was you. You called at least twice every week for three months until last week, when you quit short."

"Well?"

"Well, I called on Miss Deane. She's a fine young lady, I take it." A pause, but Colby was again silent.

"I asked her two questions. I asked her, 'When did Mr. John Colby last call on you?' 'A week ago Sunday,' says she." A momentary pause, then: "Don't you think you'd better confess now that you killed Brainerd?"

"I don't quite see the necessity."

"Well, I'll tell you the second question I asked her, then. I asked her, 'Was it when Colby called that you told him you were engaged to Brainerd?'" A long pause. "She fainted."

McMurtree waited a whole minute. Colby, with his eyes staring at the wall ahead, drummed with his fingers on the table.

"Colby, do you want that girl to have to go on the witness stand?"

They sat for half a minute, then Colby stretched out his hands:

"Put on the irons. I'll plead guilty."

"I don't think we'll need 'em," said McMurtree. "Just give me your key, and we'll go down together all nice and friendly. I have a taxi at the door."

It was a perfect crime, but an unimaginative detective spoiled it.

A WOMAN DETECTIVE

SINCE the death in Hartford, Conn., June 6, of Mrs. Zola A. Bennett, "stenographer" of the State Police Department, there has come to light the fact that she was one of the most successful women criminal investigators in the country.

The remarkable part played by Mrs. Bennett in such cases as the Edward Curtiss kidnapping case, the Putnam arson case, the Gilligan murder case and the Madden murder situation only just became known.

The Curtiss case attracted wide attention in Connecticut four or five years ago when Curtiss, who had been estranged from his wife, kidnaped his young daughter, who had been ordered kept in the custody of her mother by the court in Litchfield county. The child was spirited away and Curtiss was subsequently adjudged insane and committed to the Middletown State Hospital. The matter of recovering the child was turned over to Mrs. Bennett and after two years of most persistent effort on her part the child was located in New York and returned to her mother. No mention was ever made of the fact that it was a woman investigator who had solved the mystery.

Previously, in 1913, Mrs. Bennett first showed unusual skill as a criminal investigator in co-operation with Captain Hurley in unraveling the mystery surrounding the large number of fires in Putnam. As a result two men were arrested and convicted of arson and served long terms in prison.

In addition to these cases she played an important part in the preparation of the State's case against Mrs. Amy E. Archer Gilligan of Windsor, who several years ago was sent to State prison for life for the murder of several inmates of her home for aged people. In the case of the murder of Capt. William E. Madden in Manchester in 1919 Mrs. Bennett was also active in the State's interest.

Let the Guilty Man Suffer

By ANNE HARRIS HADLEY

IN response to a quiet knock, Philip Carr opened the door of his laboratory. He admitted the young woman whose arrival he had been awaiting the past five minutes, and whose errand he had been idly speculating upon ever since she telephoned him half an hour previously making the appointment.

Doubtless, he had reasoned, her coming was in connection with the disappearance, the night before, of ten thousand dollars from the home of her guardian, John Ashton, head of the Rubber Trust. But why was Ashton's ward taking this business upon herself? If he, Carr, was wanted on the case professionally, why had not John Ashton notified him? And why had this heiress, who certainly never troubled herself about mere matters of money, seen fit to make an appointment with him within a few hours after the newspapers announced the theft? Surely there was limitless field for speculation. And Carr began to feel that thrill of eagerness that came over him whenever he took up a new and absorbing case.

"Miss Granby?" he greeted his caller interrogatively.

"Yes, I am Helen Granby," the young woman acknowledged, "and I have come to enlist your aid, if possible."

"Come in, please," Carr requested, flinging the door wide.

As he stood aside for her to enter he noted that she was very beautiful and that she was exquisitely gowned. With all her beauty, her taste and her vast wealth, thought the young criminologist, it was not strange that half the eligible young men in town were paying her court. But even the young men in her train were for the most part forced to admit that Ashton's only nephew, Angus Gregory, and Douglas Farnsworth, an official of the Rubber Trust, were far in the lead for her favor. These things flashed through Carr's mind as he placed a chair for his caller beside the big acid-stained desk near the door.

"Mr. Carr," she began quietly as soon as she was seated, "my errand here has to do with the robbery which occurred last night at my guardian's home. Doubtless you have seen the newspaper account of it?"

Carr nodded affirmatively. The newspaper report contained a bare statement of the fact that between eight p. m. and eight the next morning ten thousand dollars in cash had been taken from a wall safe, cleverly concealed by the paneling, in Ashton's library. No theory as to how the crime was committed and no hint as to possible suspects were mentioned in the newspaper version.

"Yes," he said, "I read the account." He was still puzzled by Helen Granby's evidently deep interest in the matter, an interest sufficient to account for her presence in his laboratory. For Carr, having some idea of the immense size of the Ashton fortune, did not believe the loss of even so considerable a sum as ten thousand dollars would cause this pretty young social leader to drop her ordinary activities and take a hand in attempting its recovery.

"I came to you," she went on, as if reading his thoughts, "because Angus Gregory has been charged with the theft and arrested." Then, as Carr exclaimed in surprise, she added: "Oh, that is not in the papers—yet. But it is true. The police identified a fingerprint they found inside the safe as Angus's—that, too, after Angus declared that he had no idea in what part of the room the safe was located. Uncle—my guardian, that is—had also asserted

that to the best of his belief Angus was ignorant of the location of the safe." A long pause, then she finished quietly: "They proceeded to identify the fingerprints inside the safe as having been left by Angus's fingers."

"Well, they ought to know," replied Carr quietly, though he was astonished at this startling development. What a sensation! Ashton's nephew, a member of his household, and one upon whom the older man looked almost as a son, charged with the crime. Doubtless the newspapers were even now getting out extras.

As the girl remained silent Carr ventured the question:

"In the face of such evidence, what do you want me to do?"

"Mr. Carr," she said, her eyes meeting his bravely, "I love Angus Gregory, and I cannot believe he is a common thief. I do not believe he took that money, but if he did there is more to the affair than appears on the surface. I know you are the most skillful finder of facts in the country. They call you the Truth Seeker, and I want you to get at the truth—the whole truth—for me. Find out—all the facts."

"Regardless of whom they condemn?" demanded Carr.

"Absolutely regardless." She spoke firmly, and Carr felt a rising admiration for her sportsmanship.

"Very well, then," he agreed, "with that understanding I will see what I can learn. But I warn you, my dear young lady, that Science plays no favorites. The truth may strike friends as well as foes."

"Nevertheles, I want it," she declared.

"Tell me why Mr. Ashton, who is a careful business man, should have had such a large amount of cash in so insecure a place? Surely, it was most unusual for him to have such a sum in his home overnight."

"Very unusual," she admitted. "But my guardian had an appointment for eight o'clock this morning with a man named Herbert Holden, who had discovered some new process for treating rubber. This man had a valuable formula which the Rubber Company had agreed to purchase, and he insisted upon being paid in cash—I judge he was somewhat queer. So many scientists and inventors are," she injected. "As the interview was to take place before the banks were open, Uncle drew the money from the bank yesterday. He felt that it would be reasonably secure overnight in his wall safe, which was quite cleverly concealed. Even I did not know its exact whereabouts. Besides, he felt confident that nobody knew he had drawn out any money except the men at the bank and two officials of the company, Mr. Van Horne, the treasurer, and Douglas Farnsworth, head of the Research Department, who was to accompany Uncle to see Holden. Nevertheless, this morning when he opened the safe the money had disappeared."

"Was anything else missing?"

"No. Some jewels and the valuable papers which the safe contained were undisturbed. Nothing but the money was taken."

"Hum," muttered Carr thoughtfully. "Extraordinary. Now, Miss Granby, please tell me how the theft was discovered, everything just as it happened."

"This morning," she began, "Douglas Farnsworth, who, as I said before, was to go with Uncle, arrived at our house a few minutes before eight. He was shown into the breakfast-room where Uncle, Angus and I were just finishing our meal. Angus and I had planned an early round of golf, or I would scarcely have been up at that hour.

"After a minute or two Uncle finished eating and went into the library alone for the purpose, it afterward appeared, of taking the money from the safe. A moment later he returned and told us that he had been robbed. Then he telephoned for the police, and he would not let any one go in the library until the officers arrived, for he said some clue might be destroyed.

"Soon the men from headquarters came. While they were examining the safe Angus, Douglas and I stood just within the room watching, but none of us went near the safe.

"Turning at length from his examination, one of the officers asked us each if we had known of the existence of the safe before the robbery. All three knew there was a safe in the room, but only Douglas admitted knowledge of its exact location. Uncle confirmed our statements, saying that

so far as he knew neither Angus nor I had known the location of the concealed safe. The officer then announced that he had discovered inside it some fresh fingerprints quite different from those left by my uncle's fingers.

"Douglas brindled immediately, saying that he did not know whether or not the officer meant to cast any slurs, but inasmuch as he was one of the very few people who had known the location of the safe, and the fact that the money was to be left in it overnight, he felt that it was his due to have his fingerprints compared with the ones left by the thief, so that his innocence might be established.

"The officer protested that he had meant no reflection, but Douglas was obdurate. The comparison was made. Of course there was no similarity. Then Douglas, being thoroughly cross, suggested sarcastically to the officer that as Angus and I had been in the house we might as well follow suit, and establish the fact that it was not one of us who had visited the safe during the night. I agreed. Angus said it was a silly thing, but raised no special objection.

"A moment's comparison proved that the marks could not have been made by my fingers, but Angus——" She paused, apparently stumbling over the horror of what she was about to say, then swallowed hard and continued: "The impression of Angus's fingers tallied exactly with the marks left in the safe!

"Angus declared there was some absurd mistake, but went rather white, for he had been alone in the house the greater part of the evening, and though he stated that he had not entered the library, he could not hope to establish an alibi. When he saw that the officers were in earnest in making the charge he submitted to arrest."

"But Mr. Ashton?" questioned Carr.

"My uncle is a hard man when he feels he has been deceived. 'Let the guilty man suffer,' was all he said, and he let them take Angus away. Douglas seemed almost beside himself with rage for having unwittingly brought about the situation, and went along to the station to arrange bail for Angus. After they were gone I thought of you."

"And that is all you know of the matter?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Very well; I will do my best," promised Carr. "Don't mention to any one that I am working on the case."

"I will not," she promised, rising.

After she had gone Carr sat for a long time thinking before the acid-stained desk. At last he whistled softly to himself, as was a habit of his when struck by a surprising thought. Then he rose suddenly, seized his hat and set out for police headquarters.

There the Chief, glad to be of assistance to the distinguished criminologist, willingly placed at Carr's disposal all the information in the department's possession, and explained that Farnsworth had seen that bail was promptly secured for the accused man, and that Angus had already been released.

"But," continued the Chief soberly, "it seems almost unbelievable that young Gregory could have done such a thing. If I didn't have the evidence on him—visible, tangible evidence—I'd never believe it on any man's testimony. But, in the face of that," and he passed two freshly-made photographs over to Carr, "what is left to do but admit his guilt? The one in your left hand is a picture of the finger marks Lawson found in the safe, and the other is an enlarged photograph we made from an unquestioned impression of Gregory's fingers. You see they are identical—line for line."

"Yes," admitted Carr slowly, "that's true. Every line is identical."

"Keep them if you like," offered the Chief. "I had several prints made from our negatives."

"Thank you," said Carr absently, putting the two photographs in his pocket.

"Anything the department can do to help you will be done," went on the Chief. Carr always took pains to give due credit for such help, and more than one bit of reflected glory had fallen to the Chief's share because of Carr's care in such matters.

"Thank you, Chief. I'll probably call on you before I am through. Of course my being on the case need not be mentioned—

not even to Mr. Ashton, Farnsworth or Gregory," and with a hasty "Good-day" he went out, leaving the Chief wondering how on earth he happened to be on the case.

Carr went back to his laboratory and there worked carefully for some time. At last, seemingly satisfied with the result of his efforts, he put out of sight all traces of his recent activities and, selecting a foreign-looking volume from the shelf of books on the wall, settled down before it to read.

"That's it! By thunder! That's bound to be it!" he muttered at length, and sat staring into space for a long time.

When he shifted his position it was to reach for the telephone and get Helen Granby on the wire.

"Miss Granby," he began as soon as he had made himself known, "I expect to have some important developments to report to you tonight. May I count on your unquestioning assistance?"

"Of course," she replied readily.

"I am not absolutely sure," Carr went on, "that things will work out as planned, and so I don't want any one—any one, mind you—to get a hint that there is anything in the air. But I would like to feel sure that Mr. Ashton, Farnsworth and Angus will be available in case anything turns up. I wonder if, without letting any of the three suspect it is a frame-up, you can arrange it so they will all be at Mr. Ashton's this evening? You might invite Farnsworth to dinner," Carr hazarded.

"Yes," agreed the girl. "I can manage to have him and Angus on hand easily, but Uncle won't be in until after nine o'clock. He is to dine at Jacques's with a business acquaintance who is leaving on the 9.05. Will that be early enough?"

"Quite," declared Carr. "And please instruct the butler to admit me."

A few words more, and he hung up the receiver.

A moment later Miss Granby moved the hook gently up and down, then to central she gave the number of Farnsworth's office phone.

"Douglas," she began, when he answered the ring, "if you have nothing special on hand for this evening, come up for dinner. I want to talk things over with you; and besides, between us we may be able to cheer up Angus a bit. He is in his room brooding now. There will probably be just you, Angus and I for dinner, as Uncle is to dine with one of those everlasting rubber men."

Farnsworth accepted readily enough.

"And if Angus refuses to stick around and be comforted, then I may count on a long evening alone with you?" he suggested.

"Perhaps," she replied. "Dinner is served at seven. Good-by."

Carr meantime had not been idle.

After fussing around the laboratory a few minutes and collecting some implements that looked like a set of high-class burglar's tools, which he thrust into an innocent-looking brief-bag, he called up the chief of police and had a conversation with him. Then looking at his watch, he seemed surprised to find it was after six o'clock. Stuffing a queer-looking bunch of keys in his pocket and taking up the brief-bag, he set out. His first stop was at a nearby restaurant, where he remained long enough to get a good but hasty meal.

As he left the restaurant he was joined by a man whom he seemed to expect, for with merely a casual greeting the two fell into step, moving in the direction of the business district.

About a quarter before ten the doorbell of the Ashton residence rang, and Carr and his companion of the evening were admitted promptly by the butler. After a few low-voiced words from Carr, they were conducted to the drawing-room, where Miss Granby and Farnsworth sat before the cozy open fire, and the butler departed to carry out Carr's instructions.

"Pardon the liberty I took, Miss Granby," Carr began, as she rose and came forward to geet him, "but I have sent your butler to request Mr. Ashton and Mr. Gregory to come down."

"Oh, of course," replied she, a trifle uncertain as to just what her course should be. "Angus is in his room and Uncle has just come in." Then as Farnsworth, who had risen with her, and was standing on the

hearth rug, coughed deprecatingly, she turned. "Mr. Carr, I don't think you and Mr. Farnsworth have met. Mr. Farnsworth, Mr. Carr." The two men bowed formally, and Carr presented his companion as Mr. Mitchell.

At that instant Angus came into the room, his face one wide question, and more than a hint of fear or horror in his bearing. But before he could put his query into words John Ashton burst into the room.

"What in Sam Hill is all this?" he exploded, looking irritably from one to another. "What do you mean by sending for me like this? Do you think I am your hireling?"

"Let me explain," said Carr, taking hold of the situation. "I have cleared up some matters in connection with the disappearance of the ten thousand dollars from your safe, and I took the liberty of sending for you and Mr. Gregory, feeling that you would both be interested in what I have to say."

"And by what authority have you butted into this most unfortunate family affair?" demanded Ashton angrily.

"He did not 'butt in,'" asserted Miss Granby. "I asked him. But excuse me, Uncle. You do not understand. This is Mr. Philip Carr, the famous criminologist."

The effect of her words on each of the three men was marked. Even Farnsworth, though they had been introduced, had not realized until that moment that he stood in the presence of the most uncannily successful detective in the world. The expression of hard resentment on Angus's face gave place to one of surprise and perhaps of hope. John Ashton subsided weakly into a chair muttering:

"Philip Carr. Well, I never—never even thought of him taking a hand."

"Mr. Gregory," began Carr, turning toward the young man, "permit me to relieve your mind. The evidence I have here," and Carr indicated the brief-bag, now somewhat fuller than when he had left his laboratory, "proves conclusively your innocence of the crime with which you have so unjustly been charged."

Angus passed his hand over his forehead and squared his shoulders, but did not speak. His mood was not conducive to words.

At Carr's unexpected statement Mr. Ashton's jaw dropped. Farnsworth shifted his position uneasily. Helen Granby shot a glance of tenderness at Angus, then, turning to Carr, exclaimed:

"Do not keep us in suspense!"

"Please sit down, all of you," replied Carr. "I will make my story as brief as I can, but in order to make myself perfectly clear I must first explain a few scientific facts, for in getting to the bottom of this matter I found it necessary to fight fire with fire and to oppose science with more science."

Every one watched him intently.

"Recently a body of scientific criminals puzzled the police of half a dozen European capitals by the fingerprints they left behind. These fingerprints subsequently proved to be those of absolutely innocent and unsuspecting persons in no way connected with the crime, and were of course forgeries. These forged fingerprints were made by first protographing a genuine fingerprint. To get these genuine impressions was a simple matter. All of us leave fingermarks about promiscuously. Perhaps a little soot or chalk or powdered graphite properly placed aided them in getting a more distinct impression to protograph. An etching was then made on a metal plate. And from this —I won't bore you with the details—the impression was transferred to a rubber stamp. Quite a clever trick, doubtless, and one requiring considerable knowledge and skill, but Science," declared Carr proudly, "can always go the cleverest crook one better.

"In a case of this kind she offers us 'poroscopy,' the science of the pores, as a means of beating this clever ruse. Now, as any poroscopist can tell you, no rubber stamp will transfer the minute, indefinitely varied 'pits' marking the ends of the sweat glands in the finger-tips.

"After I obtained a copy of the photograph of the supposed fingerprint found in the safe, I examined it under a high power glass and, though I had no evidence on which to go before judge or jury, I was

convinced that it was a forgery. Some one had placed it in the safe deliberately for the purpose of incriminating Angus Gregory, and at the same time diverting suspicion from himself."

Helen Granby's eyes grew wide with astonishment as the strange tale went on, and she looked from Carr's inscrutable countenance to Angus's white face, and on to that of her guardian, who sat hunched forward in his chair, his eyes glued on the criminologist. Farnsworth was standing silently near the door, in the spot to which he had withdrawn as soon as Carr began his story, being loathe, she thought, to intrude too closely on what might be considered a purely family affair.

"Having established, at least to my own satisfaction, the fact that the fingerprint was a forgery, I sought a man with the knowledge and the motive for doing such a thing. Strangely, the only person I could think of who met these requirements was one of the very few who knew of the presence of the money in the safe." Carr paused an instant, and the silence in the room became oppressive.

"Miss Granby," he went on quietly, "thanks to you, I knew the exact whereabouts of the man I suspected—the only man having a sufficient motive, a knowledge of the presence of the money, and the technical skill necessary to put such a scheme into effect. Knowing that man's whereabouts, I was able to make a careful search of his working quarters undisturbed. My search was successful.

"I found the plates, the materials with which the crook worked, and even the completed rubber stamp with which he marked within the safe the prints which he felt sure would prove his innocence and fasten disgrace upon the man he hated. The ten thousand dollars, too, reposed in the secret cache. Oh, yes, all the evidence necessary to convict is there in that brief-bag——

"Stop!"

Carr's voice rang out suddenly, for there was a hasty movement toward the door. Carr's automatic was leveled in a second.

"There is no use to attempt to escape, Farnsworth. There are officers in the hall as well as outside the house. My friend, the chief of police, has seen to that. Your game was played—and you lost. Mitchell, who is a headquarters man, was with me when I entered by means of a master key and searched your laboratory. We discovered and removed a cleverly constructed false back in the little cabinet by the window, and in the recess we found all your apparatus for making the forged fingerprint and found likewise the money you stole.

"Oh, a man in desperate need might have been forgiven much—but you were not in need. The money was incidental. Your real object was to discredit Angus Gregory for winning Miss Granby.

"Mitchell, put the handcuffs on him."

HUNT A DUMPY BANDIT

THE police were without a clue in an effort to recover two strands of pearls and other jewelry valued at $30,000, which a robber took from the apartment of H. Ivan Stengel, 1049 Park avenue, while Mrs. Stengel, unexpectedly returning to her apartment, looked on.

Mrs. Stengel went to the apartment, on the sixth floor, after both her maid and cook had failed to answer her ring from downstairs. When she opened the door a bandit was leisurely bent over her jewel case, she said, selecting his loot with care.

He took one strand of pearls valued at $14,000 and another at $10,000, besides several rings and other valuable pieces.

Mrs. Stengel described the bandit as small and "dumpy." Further than this she could not say, as the mask entirely covered his face. When he looked up and saw her staring at him he slowly turned and drew a revolver, she declared. Then she ran, convinced he was determined to shoot.

A Glass of Water

By JACK BECHDOLT

CHAPTER ONE

ELIAS SHORT closed the door that shut off the cottage living-room from its reception hall, his face still wreathed in the jovial smile with which he had excused himself from his guest to "primp for dinner."

Short was a somewhat fleshy, jovial figure past his fortieth birthday, a man with a positive manner and a hearty voice, a man with a hand extended to shake the hand of every stranger, a member of lodges and associations, a booster, a leading business man, a progressive citizen of Rydon, in which town he was manager of the branch house of Hoffman & Co.

As the door clicked shut behind him Short's fleshy hand dropped limply from the knob. The ruddy color faded from his cheeks. His knees sagged and suddenly the whole hearty figure of the genial, aggressive business man seemed to collapse and shrink like a punctured balloon, the dead weight of him sagging against the panels of the door as his knees refused longer to perform their natural function.

Short's breath rattled in his throat. The pasty, white face began to glisten with a cold sweat of fear and the pupils of his eyes contracted to pin points, glaring wildly like the eyes of a rat in a trap. Short's right hand rose in an ineffectual, half-completed gesture, an involuntary movement of surrender, of negation.

Through the thin-paneled door came the sound of two voices, the voice of Short's pretty, motherly little wife and the answering politeness of the guest Short had brought to dine with them, Canbury, the auditor of Hoffman & Co. They were saying the usual cheerful, innocuous things that two comparative strangers exchange.

Short heard his wife's exclamation:

"Now I must ask you to excuse me a moment! I must look after dinner. My maid left yesterday, so I'm cook tonight.. Mr. Short will be down in just a moment."

Short heard that and Canbury's polite

"Certainly. I'll just make myself comfortable and try not to make myself too much of a bother."

The words were a challenge to his courage. They told him he must act quickly. Whatever his plan was to be, it must be made within the next few moments and executed without faltering. He roused himself with an effort and went softly up the stair leading to the second floor.

There was a pistol in the top drawer of the dresser in his bedroom. It had been kept there as protection against possible burglars, more for the reassurance of his wife than any other real need. With that pistol Elias Short could blow out his brains.

His first panicky thought had been of the pistol. But now, when he had pulled open the drawer and felt the chill of its metal against his fingers, he shrank from it aghast, his cunning brain fighting with the blind instinct of every animal that loves life.

Ah, no! This was not the way out.

To die! That would be ridiculous! To snuff out the life that coursed through his veins, to put an end to that keen, scheming mind of which he was so proud, to see all his planning and work come to such an end, a mere confession of cowardice? Not for Elias Short!

There must be another way—was another way—provided he had the courage to play his hand well for a few hours more.

Canbury had dropped off the 4.15 from New York that afternoon, scarcely two hours ago. When Elias Short saw his long, lean figure materializing in shadow against the ground glass panel of his office door, he knew what it meant. Discovery!

The central office of Hoffman & Co. had become suspicious, hence Canbury in Rydon. There could be no other explanation. Canbury was the company's auditor and investigator. He visited the company's branches in various parts of the world and he was like the stormy petrel, sure harbinger of disaster.

And Elias Short knew only too well that there was something for Canbury to find in Rydon. Over a space of two years his secret operations with the firm's money had continued. Wall Street, the lure of all who would get rich quickly, that had been his game. Hoffman & Co.'s funds furnished the means to speculate and Short's position as branch manager made it simple to cover his juggling of books.

Short had done rather well, at that. Unlike so many who divert other's money to speculate, he had good luck. Time and again he had borrowed from the funds in his charge, cleaned up a good thing on the market, replaced the company's money and put away a neat profit in the safe deposit box he rented in New York under a false name.

Looking back on this now, it seemed to Elias Short as though some perverse fate lured him on and on, lulling him into a false security, leading him into growing boldness, in order to betray him thus. For at the moment Canbury's shadow crossed the ground glass window in the door Short had appropriated to his own use twenty thousand dollars of his firm's money to swing the biggest deal of his secret career. His own stake, the hoarding of the safe deposit box, had gone along with that to cover margins.

And yet it was only a matter of a few days before he would have the principal back and his own profit beside. Already the market had begun to react as he had bet it would. Just a few more days—and here came Canbury, damn him!

Short wondered what had roused Canbury's suspicions against him. He had covered his tracks well. Though he had profited by his speculations not a soul knew of it. His mode of life remained the same, a simple, wholesome village life well within the scope of the salary he was paid. His wife had no inkling. Nobody knew or could guess—yet here came this damned Canbury!

Not a sign, not a hint of all this showed in Elias Short's face or voice or manner as he sprang from his chair to grasp Canbury's hand and pump it energetically. Not a hint of it as he brought Canbury home in triumph to dine with the family. Not even a suggestion of faltering when Canbury confided gravely that he wished to spend the evening going over the branch office accounts. Not until the door closed between Short and his guest, leaving Short near collapse in the hall, did the nervous strain tell.

Something of his former courage was returning again, a reaction from that first shocking thought of suicide. There was another way. Short saw it opening before him. A dangerous way, a way that called for courage and prompt action, but a way consistent with his secret dream of power.

Short saw the way and decided to follow it.

A less courageous man, he reflected with satisfaction, would have been lost in such a situation. Not he. Simply, now that Canbury was on his trail, he must get rid of Canbury, seize the cash on hand—a goodly sum, thanks to the number of notes and mortgages recently called in—and escape with the big stake.

His wife, his children?

Short had no time to include them in any plan. They must take their chances. There was no choice for him, either complete exposure and disgrace or his own safety at the cost of his family. Well, he came first. That was all.

Mrs. Short hastening in to add a touch of powder to her cheeks in honor of a guest, surprised her husband in the dressing-room before the medicine cabinet.

"What in the world are you looking for?" she smiled whimsically.

"Nothing. Just that sleeping-draught Doctor Bransom gave me."

"Oh, Eli," Mrs. Short's face grew serious. "I don't think you ought to depend so much on that stuff."

"Didn't you send that bottle to the pharmacy to be refilled as I asked you?"

"Yes, dear. It's here, not unwrapped yet." His wife handed him the wrapped package. Short tore off the paper and nodded satisfaction at the filled bottle of colorless liquid.

"Well, that's better."

"But you don't need it now."

"No, no. Of course not. Just wanted to be sure you had got it before I go to bed tonight. I had the deuce of a sleepless time last night, I tell you."

Mrs. Short lingered, her face perplexed, unhappy.

"Eli," she said, hesitating, "I know it's deadful to lie awake, but it's too bad to depend on a dope."

"Nonsense! Doctor Bransom knows what he's doing. I get proper rest with this stuff."

"But it's dangerous. You know an overdose would—would kill you."

"I don't take overdoses. I guess I've got a little sense."

"Well, it's habit-forming, too. Doctor Bransom says so. I—I was talking to him about it only today. I do wish you——"

Short rose to the moment.

"There, stop worrying about me," he commanded, with a chuckle and a touch on his wife's shoulder. "I won't use the stuff unless I absolutely have to. Just want it around."

As though to demonstrate he placed the bottle behind all the others on the shelf and closed the cabinet door, locking it.

"Run down to your guest," he said. "I'll be right along."

His wife, reminded of duties, hurried away.

Short washed his hands and brushed his thinning hair, humming under his breath. His plan was made, a simple plan. That sleeping potion would do the trick. Doctor Bransom had warned him that more than five drops was dangerous, that ten drops would kill a horse. A powerful heart depressor was its principal ingredient. Harmless looking, tasteless, the color of clear water, there was wholesale death in that bottle—painless, quiet, certain death, a most expedient death, say, for a man like Canbury who blocked his path to freedom.

Short did not return below by the front stair he had come by. He went to a servant's stair at the rear of the house, a stair communicating with the kitchen. He listened there until he heard his wife leave the room. Then he descended. The various items of the dinner she was preparing waited ready on the range.

Short snatched the salt shaker from a shelf and sprinkled meat, potatoes, asparagus and gravy liberally. From a tin he added a liberal sifting of red pepper, stirring his seasoning into the various food. He had scarcely done before his wife was back.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "you frightened me coming the back way. Hurry along with you, I'm ready to serve dinner."

"I'm ready to eat it," Short promised genially.

CHAPTER TWO

DINNER was finished and Short pressed a cigar on his guest as they took their coffee.

Canbury had eaten with good appetite, to Short's great satisfaction. Seemingly he had never noticed the extraordinary seasoning of the food. He was the sort of man who ate with little thought of what went into his mouth. "Damn you," Short had reflected, watching him. "You can sit here and eat my dinner and act as if you had never a care on your mind, and all the time, down in your heart, you know you're here to dig up the facts that will send me to prison."

"May I trouble you for another glass of water?" Canbury begged.

"And me, please, Martha," Short seconded. "My wife is a wonderful cook—none better—but I'll swear there was a lot of salt in that meat."

"I don't know what got into me!" Mrs. Short exclaimed apologetically. "I must have had a regular salt and pepper spree. I never do such things. It must be the excitement of seeing Mr. Canbury again."

"Now, Mrs. Short, that meal was delicious," Canbury protested, cutting off her apologies. But he drank his water greedily.

"I'll leave you men to smoke a minute," Mrs. Short smiled. She left the room and Short heard her climbing the stairs.

"Can't stick around long, old man," Canbury sighed. "I'll have to get through at the office tonight. Needed out in Chicago, and I start tomorrow early."

"Yes, work is the devil," Short agreed. "I'll run down to the office with you, to be sure everything checks up O. K."

"Well, if you can stand being away from a snug little home and wife and kids like yours. I know I wouldn't like it if they were my family."

"Business has to come first with me," Short smiled. His guest was showing signs of impatience to be off and he suggested: "Let me call Mrs. Short. She will want to tell you good-by." He followed his wife upstairs.

Mrs. Short was leaving the dressing-room, which was between their separate bedrooms. She greeted her husband with a start of surprise. There was a curious appearance of guilt in her bright eye and flushed cheek.

"Run down and tell Canbury good-by," Short said. "He's got to spend the evening at the office checking up accounts."

"What a pity!"

"Yes. And I'll have to spend the evening with him, confound it!"

When he was alone Short unlocked the medicine cabinet, got the bottle of sleeping-draught Doctor Bransom had prescribed and dropped it into his coat pocket.

He considered a moment before his dresser, debating whether to take the pistol. He decided against it. "Here's something a lot better and surer—and safer," he grinned, patting the vial in his coat pocket.

As he left with Canbury, Short paused at the door dutifully and kissed his wife on the cheek. This was his good-by—his final good-by he reflected as he hurried to join his guest. Not much of a good-by from a man leaving his wife and children to shift for themselves in a hard world. Strangely enough, he felt little compunction. He had supposed he was fond enough of his wife—once he had been mad about her, when they first married. Yet he didn't seem to care now. That other interest—self-preservation, escape, a life far away, made pleasant by the fortune he would take with him—those things seemed infinitely more important to him.

He glanced back at his modest home, let his eye rove about the pleasant village street. He would never see these things again.

What would Martha do? And the children?

Actually he didn't care.

He was suddenly proud of his indifference. "I'm stronger," he exulted in his secret thoughts. "I know how to take what I want and get away with it. No sickly sentimentality about wife and kids is going to hold me back. I'm big enough to look out for myself first, last and all the time."

"You certainly look satisfied and pleased with life," Canbury commented at his elbow. "Of course, you've got reason to be."

"Yes," Short admitted, "I'm happy."

His hand touched the poison vial in his coat pocket.

He could contemplate even murder without a qualm.

CHAPTER THREE

THE two men sat in Short's private office, Canbury deeply absorbed in a mass of statements and accounts, Short lolling back in his desk chair, smoking placidly.

An empty glass stood at Canbury's left hand.

Short glanced occasionally from the glass to the hands of the office clock—and waited patiently.

Canbury's first act on entering the room

had been to draw a glass of water from the cooler in the corner.

"That was a bully dinner," he smiled, "and I certainly can't blame Mrs. Short's wonderful cooking, but I'm thirsty as the dickens."

"Here, too," Short agreed, drinking with him. "Seems as if Martha had got too much seasoning in things tonight."

Canbury had not worked half an hour before he asked Short for another drink. Short discovered that the water cooler was almost empty and apologized for the meagerness.

Now he sat, dividing his attention between clock and glass. A train left Rydon at 10.45. That was the train Short meant to take. He would buy a ticket to New York.

But at a junction twenty miles up the line he would purposely miss that New York train and catch an express into Canada. He would be in time to connect with a liner out of Quebec. Once he had the ocean between him and Hoffman & Co. he would have ample time to disappear forever.

He had yet an hour before train time. Surely that was enough. Surely Canbury would remember his thirst. Short's own throat was getting parched. He wondered angrily if this Canbury was made of iron that he didn't feel the desire for more water. Why the devil hadn't he dumped more salt into the food?

Calm as ever outwardly, his iron nerve holding good, Short fumed within and suffered all the torment of waiting.

At last Canbury looked up with a sigh.

"Short," he said, "do you mind finding me some drinking water? I'm right in the middle of a column of figures."

"Why, not at all." Short leaped up.

"This cooler's empty," he reported from the corner of the room. "I think there's water in the outer office."

Canbury murmured acquiescence as he hurried out.

In the far corner of the big outer room Short extracted the cork from the small bottle of colorless medicine. He poured its contents rapidly into the glass. His hand did not shake, his pulse scarcely quickened as he prepared the poison draft. He was proud of his iron nerve.

This was the big moment of his life. This decided his future with dreadful certainty—disgrace, or freedom and fortune. It cost a man's life, that alternative. He met the crisis calmly, resolute and unflurried. Something to be proud of, that.

The potion half filled the glass, enough to kill a dozen men.

Short dropped the empty vial back into his pocket.

He added a few drops of water to the poison for form's sake and hurried back with the mixture.

"You're sort of out of luck, Canbury," he jested. "The water coolers seem pretty well milked out. Been a warm day."

"That's plenty, thanks," Canbury said, and raised the glass. "How about you?" He hesitated, offering the drink to Short.

Short laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, I got a drink. Beat you to it, but I'll swear I went fifty-fifty on the last of the water."

Canbury drank the contents of the glass without pausing.

"Tastes flat," he commented, smacking his lips.

"Yes, the ice is used up in those coolers, I guess."

"Yes." Canbury leaned back in his chair. "Well," he sighed, "I feel done up with this warm weather and the train trip."

Short's pretense of naturalism grew a little strained. He dared not watch his victim too closely, yet he could scarcely drag his glance away from him.

The job was done, Short knew that. For good or evil, weal or woe, this act was finished, irrevocable.

Done! His heart leaped as he saw Canbury's head droop with sudden weariness. The auditor recovered with a jerk.

"Funny," he frowned, "must be close in here. I'm sleepy."

Short found relief for his overcharged emotions by leaping to his feet, muttering something about opening a window. He glanced over his shoulder from his pretense and saw that Canbury's head had

dropped with chin touching his chest, the mouth hung open. His hands relaxed idly. A curious pallor was spreading over his face.

Short tiptoed back to him. He seized his shoulder and shook it. He called Canbury's name. Finally he seized his wrist and felt for the pulse. He could feel merely a faint stirring of blood there. Canbury's hand was growing cold.

Short glanced at the clock in sudden alarm. It seemed to him that hours had passed. Actually, so the clock said, five minutes had gone.

"Enough to kill a horse."

Canbury was dead—or dying—now.

How simple it had been! How easily done! How lucky he had that sleeping-draught at hand! Why the very cause of it was a sleepless night or two while he had worried about his secret deal. Didn't that prove how a smart, courageous man could turn every event to his own profit—provided only he was smart enough—courageous enough?

He remembered with pain his first panicky impulse to turn the pistol on himself in the moment of discovery. How close he had been to losing everything just because he lost his nerve for a moment!

Short got a small traveling bag from his desk and hurried through the outer office to a vault. He knew the combination by heart. It was an easy task to open the great steel doors and fill his bag with banknotes. He was careful to close the door and set the combination again.

The whole job had taken not more than twenty minutes, so the clock said. Plenty of time to make the train.

A last glance around, a last look toward Canbury. He could see him through the open door to the private office, slumped in that chair. No more than a heap of old clothes now, old clothes and a body of no more use in this world.

Short smiled grimly and let himself out of the door. The spring lock snapped as he closed it. The office would remain that way until the moment of discovery in the morning.

Short walked, not too rapidly, down the village street to the station. Nobody was about, another stroke of luck. Nothing moved except once, a couple of blocks from the railroad, when a taxi passed him at a high rate of speed.

He saw the station lights, stepped along its platform and approached the ticket window leisurely.

"Well," he sighed, pleased with everything, "that's that."

CHAPTER FOUR

"A TICKET for New York," Short said to the agent behind the wicket. A glance at the clock within confirmed his own impression that he still had almost five minutes until train time.

The ticket was handed him for signature. Short took the pen and bent to the task, his hand steady. He was aware that somebody had approached his elbow, another ticket purchaser waiting, no doubt.

The ticket in his grasp, he picked up his bag and turned to leave the window. He found himself face to face with Canbury and looking squarely into the muzzle of the pistol Canbury held.

And simultaneously another figure, the uniformed figure of the patrolman on duty at the station, materialized at his other side and pinioned his arms.

Elias Short was utterly incapable of speech. He could only gape into Canbury's pale face. His thoughts were in a mad jumble, a nightmare chaos, in which one note reiterated again and again like the toll of a death-knell—caught!

"Hold him," Canbury directed and picked up the bag Short had dropped. Canbury ripped the leather with a pocket knife, glanced at the contents and signified his satisfaction. "There's your evidence," he said to the police officer. "Here, get your hand out of that pocket."

Canbury's quick eyes detected the stealthy movement Short had made toward the incriminating vial. Canbury's hand searched and found it. He held the vial up for inspection.

"Good heaven!" he gasped, reading its label. "If that's what I drank I can't make out why I'm here. There must have been enough to kill an army."

He turned to Short.

"Did you empty all that in my glass?"

"You can't prove it," Short growled.

"I'll come pretty close to it before I'm through with you—and through with your accounts. I think I see now what's behind this attempt to murder me. Well, take him along to the station, officer. We'll find out in time, but——"

Canbury paused with a shudder.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "I can't make it out. I wasn't unconscious more than ten minutes. The clock proved that. Just dropped off and woke up in time to see this pretty crook getting into the vault, in time to see him fill that bag and make his get-away. And he gave me enough poison to kill a horse."

Through the agonizing bewilderment within Short's own brain the same wonder ran, the same question to which he could supply no answer. He had failed, but why? How? In what manner?

Lacking a place to put the blame, lacking any glimmer of an answer to the mystery, it seemed as though his thoughts would drive him mad. Poison enough to kill a dozen men, and Canbury drank it all and lived.

They sent for Mrs. Short. In the presence of both men the answer came to light at last.

"I did it!" she cried. "Thank God, I did it! I saved him from that awful thing, at least! Oh, thank God!"

She turned on Canbury, her eyes wet with tears.

"My husband suffered with sleeplessness for years. Finally he got the doctor to prescribe this draught, five drops in a glass of water. He got to depend upon it and I was worried—afraid lest he form a bad habit. I went to Doctor Bransom and talked it over with him. Doctor Bransom agreed with me there was danger from a powerful drug like that, especially danger to a man like Eli who has a weakheart.

"Doctor Bransom explained to me that habitual sleeplessness is more a mental than a physical condition. My husband had gotten used to depending on this medicine to induce sleep, he said. If, without his knowledge, that medicine was changed into pure, harmless water, he would still sleep after taking it, because he would think it capable of making him sleep.

"Eli had asked me to get the prescription filled again and when he spoke of it before dinner I felt it was time to follow Doctor Bransom's advice. Directly after dinner I went back to the medicine cabinet and poured out all but a few drops of the sleeping-draught, filling the bottle with water.

"I shall never doubt that some Higher Power guided me to save Elias from that terrible crime," Short's wife added.

But it was after Canbury had verified his new suspicions and uncovered the amount of Elias Short's defalcation that the wretched failure received the worst shock of all.

Canbury smiled scornfully upon him.

"You poor fool!" he exclaimed. "You thought I came here to uncover your crookedness. The company sent me to investigate another matter altogether. Had you kept your hands off me, I never would have guessed you had a guilty conscience."

RECAPTURED CONVICTS

ANTHONY CASKI and John Corowski, Sing Sing prisoners who recently escaped from the State Military Camp at Peekskill, were returned by Sheriff Klein of Columbia county and placed in solitary confinement. The two men, each of whom has two and a half years' sentence to serve, now face reindictment for jail breaking.

When taken before Warden Lawes the prisoners said they had just gone hunting and had eventually lost their way in the woods.

"P. O. P." Takes a Hand

By H. BELANGER

WITH outward modesty, but secret satisfaction, Detective-Sergeant Blitz had received the hearty congratulations of Chief Blenny and the "boys," had carefully tucked a roll of crisp five-hundred-dollar bills down into the trouser pocket of the citizen suit he wore, and had hurried down the steps toward home.

Ten thousand dollars! It was a fortune—a great glorious fortune that spelled many things to Sergeant Blitz. He had been desperately in need of money; there was Anna's illness and the necessary trip South, the expense of risking now and then on margins on the Exchange—margins that mysteriously shrank to mere selvages when he touched them—the mortgage on his home, too, was due, and it could not be renewed without a substantial bonus. Then had come a tip, the following up of which had landed the murderer, Baldy Moore, behind bars, and the fat reward in his own pocket. He could pay all his debts now, and still have enough over to become the owner of a certain classy roadster that had haunted him since the auto show.

As he walked along he nodded rather absently to acquaintances, stopped to flip a quarter into the hat of a blind pencil vender, and a moment later was in the midst of the matinee crowd leaving the Regal Theatre.

His tall, broad-shouldered figure towered a little above the average folks in the crowd, and his jaunty manner did not show as much of the aggressive bluster that usually hid the piercing glances of the steel blue eyes that were feared by every crook in the city. For Blitz was considered a wizard in hunting down criminals—that is, all except one, and this one had been as daring as lightning and as elusive as thin air. But he would not even think of that today.

An old, stoop-shouldered woman touched his arm timidly.

"Please, sir, can you direct me to Harney Street?" she mumbled, her watery eyes peering up at him from behind a rusty black veil.

She looked very old and feeble, her shabby black hat did not conceal the wispy gray hair around her lined face, and the long shawl, held tight in trembling hands, made her narrow shoulders seem thinner, more stooped.

"I guess I got confused, comin' out of the theatre," her shaking voice went on. "I'm staying with my daughter, 'Lizbeth, but she couldn't come, and I wanted to see the show so bad."

Sergeant Blitz had listened tolerantly.

"Harney Street is two blocks south," he told her, and he pointed in the general direction.

"Must I cross the street?" she asked fearfully.

Blitz smiled.

"No, keep right on this side and you will come to it," then he hurried on. It was at that moment that he caught a glimpse of a skulking figure dodging through the crowd ahead, and unconsciously his hand slipped to his pocket.

"My God!" he gasped aloud, and he staggered toward a telegraph pole, against which he leaned weakly. The fortune had vanished!

Sergeant Blitz had won his place on the detective force by quick thinking, and he now recalled that skulking figure. He was glad the old woman had delayed him, or he might not have noticed the crook. With

Blitz to think was to act, and his long legs carried him quickly down the street. He soon overtook the fellow he suspected, and his heavy hand descended on the frail shoulder.

The man wriggled under the grasp, and cringed beneath the detective's penetrating gaze.

"Turn it over," snarled Blitz.

"I ain't got a thing," came the whimpering answer.

Blitz swore roundly.

"Up this alley for you. I'm going to frisk you if it costs my life," and he dragged the frightened, protesting youth along the alley.

Behind a pile of empty packing-cases, with quick fingers he searched the man's pockets. All kinds of harmless truck—a broken penknife, keys, buttons, cigarettes—he dumped into the mud, then a vicious-looking hypodermic needle and a tiny vial. But the money, the roll of crisp bills, was not there.

"What did you do with it? Quick!" he snapped.

"I ain't got nothin', I tell yer," repeated the youngster.

"Well, you took something, didn't you?"

The drug addict remained silent.

"Come, come; what did you do with it?" and the detective's powerful fingers ground down onto the thin bones of the other's shoulder.

The youth cried out in pain.

"I—I dropped it in the gutter—when you grabbed me," he yelled, and he squirmed from Blitz's suddenly loosened hold and was off like a streak down the alley.

Blitz turned and was back on the street almost as fast as the boy disappeared at the other end of the alley. The crowds had thinned, and there was not a suspicious-looking person in sight. An officer stood back against a store window, and Blitz hurried toward him.

"Did you see any one picking up something from the gutter, Joe?" he asked thickly, as he waved aside the congratulations his old friend began to extend.

Joe Bentley twirled his night-stick thoughtfully.

"Why, yes," he said, after a moment. "That blind pencil vender edged over to the curbstone and picked up something. I thought it was probably a cigar butt, and laughed to myself at a blind man seeing it."

But Blitz did not laugh.

"Which way did he go?" he impatiently demanded.

"Down toward Essex Street. *You* haven't lost anything?"

But the question was not answered then, for Blitz was half-way down the block and going strong.

At the corner of Essex he made further inquiries.

"Yes, sir; a blind man hurried down the street a while ago," the colored porter of the Essex House stopped brushing the window long enough to tell him.

Blitz was a hound on the scent now; that "blind" man could not escape him if he was still in the city. And he did not—but it was three hours later, after running up several side tracks, and when any ordinary sleuth would have given up, that he leaned over his man in the dingy back-room of a disreputable soft-drink parlor along the river front.

Blitz deliberately slipped into a chair beside the other, whose dirty finger was laboriously counting out a handful of small coins.

"Keep the change, but pass over what you picked up in the gutter," commanded Blitz.

The man jumped as though a gun was leveled at his head, and he peered up through the heavy smoked glasses.

"Who-o are you?" he faltered; "I'm a poor, honest man, earning my living."

"By deceiving the public?"

"No, no. I sell pencils. If they don't want them, that's their business."

Blitz swore impatiently.

"Well, pass over the other money, and quick, too. You were seen picking it up when the pockpocket dropped it in the gutter. I'll arrest you for stealing it if you don't."

"I'm a poor, honest——" began the beggar.

"Well, I'll show you what I am in a moment if——" and Blitz made such a threatening motion toward him that the man reached down into his pocket and brought out a soiled blue bandana handkerchief. This he laid on the table and reluctantly began to untie several big knots. Blitz breathed a sigh of relief. His quest was over. Again the roadster floated before his inner vision. And then the roadster took a header into thin air, for the handkerchief was open now, lying flat on the table, and rolled up in a ball in the center was a single greasy-looking bill, with the figure "10" plainly visible.

So that was what the drug fiend had picked out of somebody's pocket and thrown away. He looked keenly at the beggar, and from his experience he knew that the man was not deceiving him.

Slowly he arose and walked out of the saloon. There was nothing to hurry home for now; there seemed nothing that he could do, and, from force of habit, he made his way back to Headquarters.

Chief Blenny glanced up from his desk, then turned around sharply and watched the dejected figure as it meekly opened the swinging rail, instead of banging through as was his usual custom.

"Sick, Blitz?" he called. "Or have you lost it all on the races so soon?"

Blitz turned a miserable, unhappy face to his chief.

"Frisked, Chief—as neatly at *that,*" and he attempted to snap his fingers, but even that attempt failed, and he seated himself at his desk.

Blenny pulled his big hulk from between the arms of his swivel-chair and made his way to Blitz's desk.

"We'll put the whole force on it—comb the city——" he began.

But the detective shook his head.

"It's gone, Chief. We couldn't trace that money, but I have a hunch who took it."

Chief Blenny tried to remonstrate, but Blitz looked so miserably unhappy that he went back to his work, and the detective sat staring straight ahead. Then he took from his pocket a rather grimy envelope, and from this he removed and spread on his desk a scrap of yellow paper.

"If you want to know who the guy was that killed the watchman and robbed the safe at the Curry Import Company," the poorly printed missive read, "nail Baldy Moore. It was him," and the note was signed "P. O. P."

That was the tip he had received, the tip that led to Baldy's arrest, and he had an idea that his loss of the money had something to do with that yellow slip of paper.

Blitz stared at it while a look of futile hatred grew in his face. He had long hated this "P. O. P." fellow, and he felt that even at that moment he was laughing at him.

This unseen enemy was responsible for a great many of his worries during the past three years. Cunning, devilishly clever in his methods, the unknown—except for the taunting initials he always left at the scene of each crime—had seemed to work alone. This crook had committed a series of daring hold-ups and robberies that left the police and detective force rather puzzled. Blitz had sworn to capture this P. O. P. fellow and make him suffer, but P. O. P. was as elusive as his name, and, becoming bolder, had even sent to Blitz—always on this same yellow paper—an occasional list of prospective affairs he was planning. One by one, although never in the order expected, the crimes were carried out. The force had laughed long and hard at Blitz's discomfiture, and the very mention of "Pop," as it had degenerated to, made Blitz see red.

The penciled tip on the murderer of the watchman had been a surprise to Blitz. He considered it a joke at first, and had kept the matter to himself while he investigated. Then, when he had nailed Baldy Moore, and forced a confession from him, he had kept the source of his information to himself. The front pages of the newspapers had spoken glowingly of his powers, and of the reward the insurance company was paying.

Slowly, methodically, Blitz went back over the incidents from the moment the ten thousand dollars was placed in his hand. The office had been rather crowded. One

of the papers had sent two men to take a picture of the actual handing over of the ten thousand dollars afterwards, some of the boys had walked with him to the door. He had hurried down the steps and along the street, intending to peek at the roadster as he passed the window where it was displayed. Then the crowd of people—the querulous old woman inquiring a direction, the prowling drug fiend—why, there had been a dozen chances while the crowd surged around him.

He roused himself, and carefully put away the scrap of yellow paper. P. O. P. had simply played another of his grim jokes, had sent the tip to him, feeling that his conceit and love of glory would keep him from telling the force where he got his information. Blitz felt his cheeks burn suddenly, for he had done just that—played right into the crook's hand. And P. O. P., knowing he could not collect for the tip, had let the detective do all the work and collect the reward for *him*. For *him!*

"Damn him," Blitz ground out between his clenched teeth. "If I ever get him—and I will some day—I'll grind him into pulp. I'll not leave enough of that skunk for a third-degree."

A shadow fell on Blitz's desk, and he looked up to see a messenger boy standing there.

"A lady, sir; she said I was to give you this in person," said the freckled-faced youngster.

"A lady?" muttered Blitz, as he took a long white envelope and looked down at the painfully small writing.

"Yep. An old lady, dressed in black, tall, thin, black veil." The boy had aspirations to be a detective, and he wanted to impress the great Blitz.

The description sounded familar to the sleuth, but just now his mind was too full of bitterness to recall trifles. He gave the boy a dime, and when the youngster had gone he tore open the envelope. He almost jumped from his chair as he drew out a folded yellow paper.

"A taunt at my stupidity," Blitz guessed, and he opened out the paper and read:

"Dear Blitz: The reward, as you know, was to go to the person directly responsible for the arrest of the one who committed the Import crime. And it did finally reach me.

"I feel a little explanation should be given. It is not customary for a crook to give another away, but Baldy Moore had a pal, a darn good pal, and he double-crossed this pal, stole his wife, broke his heart—deserved what he will get. Enough said. I knew you needed money, almost as badly as I did—thought we could act together—you to collect for me. I was afraid you might forget to split, so decided to do that part myself.

"Thanks for collecting it. You'll find your share enclosed.

"Until we meet again,

"P. O. P."

Blitz snatched at the envelope. Yes, it was thick.

He peered in, and then drew out one, two—ten new crisp five-hundred-dollar bills.

ALLEGED "FENCE" ARRESTED

ACTING on information furnished by three prisoners in the Tombs, Detectives Kelly and Van Valkenberg of Headquarters arrested Adolph Berman, thirty-one, at his home on a charge of criminally receiving $47,950 worth of stolen Liberty bonds.

The bonds were part of $300,000 loot from the Walton State Bank of Walton, Kan., in a robbery last January, according to the police. The three informants against Berman were arrested after an attempt to sell some of the bonds to Detective Degilio of Headquarters.

The two men have been indicted and are awaiting trail.

Berman, who was recently indicted, was held in $10,000 bail.

Lawfully Swindled

By GLENN G. GRAVATT

QUITE unexpectedly I came across my friend, Sheridan Scott, the Crime Deflector, dining with his arch-enemy, Red Milton, alias The Fox, in a small downtown café. I proceed to join them at the little table in the corner where they were seated.

"How are you?" greeted the detective, at the same time rising and drawing up a chair for me. "Milton, this is Jack Darcey, reporter for the *Herald*. You know Milton, don't you, Darcey?"

"I certainly ought to," I admitted, "as much trouble as he's made for the police."

"That's not very complimentary to me, I'm afraid," murmured the notorious crook, dispassionately.

"Milton holds the enviable record of having never been convicted of a crime," grinned Scott, cheerfully.

"That's no reason why he shouldn't be in the pen for life," I responded, looking straight at The Fox, who only laughed good-naturedly.

While Milton, who was a red-headed Irishman, was the prince of bunco artists, the king of con men, and a wizard at obtaining money under false pretenses, he was a likable fellow in a good many ways. We could not help but admire the tact and resourcefulness he had evinced in many recent undertakings, as well as his supreme wit and cleverness in successfully evading the clutches of the law.

He had been arrested at least a dozen times that I was aware of, but no court as yet had ever succeeded in fastening on him the crime of which he was accused. Time after time they were forced to release him because of insufficient evidence.

Scott, the Crime Deflector, so called because he usually deflected or side-tracked a crime before it was committed, and Milton, the crook, were professional enemies and social friends. Constant war was on between them, Scott being the pursuer and Milton the pursued. Even as we sat there idly talking I knew that the nimble brain of The Fox was at that very moment devising some way of extracting money from an unsuspecting public. I wondered what his next stratagem would be.

"Sorry," yawned Milton, finally, "to terminate our little visit. I have an appointment, and must be on my way. By the way," he challenged, "if you ever get enough on me to put me in jail, I'll see that you're treated to the best dinner you ever ate at the Sunset Inn."

Scott was a good sportsman as well as a fine detective.

"If you ever make any money in this town from now on by your wits, I'll take you out to the Sunset Inn myself," he answered.

The Fox excused himself and left. I still had my dessert, so Scott remained with me.

"Did you hear about the last stunt he pulled?" questioned the detective when the other was gone.

"No. Tell me about it." I became interested immediately. I knew that I would hear something out of the ordinary.

"Milton in some manner became acquainted with a rancher over towards Owensmouth by the name of Burroughs. He learned his name and address. Burroughs had not the slightest idea who Milton was. A little later, when the rancher had forgotten all about meeting this man, he received a letter with a ten-dollar bill enclosed, reading something like this: 'Having been employed in the Government

Engraving Bureau at Washington for some time, I have perfected a plan for counterfeiting notes so nearly like the genuine that even a banker cannot tell the difference. Sample is enclosed. If you desire to purchase any of these notes, insert an ad in the personal column of next Thursday's *Times,* saying, "I accept."' Then followed quotations on different amounts of these spurious bills, there being a sliding scale. The larger the amount purchased the cheaper they were in proportion. Although Milton is a good character reader, he made a mistake when he selected Burroughs for his victim. Fortunately for the rancher, he reported the affair to the police at once."

"I suppose he sized up Burroughs, decided he was a good prospect, and would never mention the incident to the authorities," I suggested.

"Exactly. Had Burroughs accepted the offer to purchase, say, fifty thousand dollars, intending to make $40,000 for himself, Milton would have kept the rancher's money, and never would have delivered a single note to him, counterfeit or otherwise."

"Wouldn't Milton be afraid Burroughs would squeal if he did that?"

"I should say not. He would have Burroughs where he wanted him. The rancher couldn't ask the police to help him get his money back. He would be just as much of a criminal as Milton. If he reported to the police that he lost his money trying to purchase counterfeit notes, they would arrest him."

"They couldn't arrest Milton then?" I inquired.

"He obtained no money. There was no crime committed. What could they arrest him for?"

"For counterfeiting."

"That's the best part of the scheme. That was a genuine ten-dollar bill he sent through the mail."

About a week or ten days after our conversation in the café the Crime Deflector called me over to his home one evening. I found him attired in a silk dressing-gown. A cigarette dangled in one corner of his mouth. As usual he was in a jolly mood. Now and then he gave a little upward twist to the tips of the little black mustache which adorned his upper lip, and I knew that to be a sure indication that he was about to be victorious in whatever he was undertaking.

"How would you like to own an automobile?" he asked, naming a certain make of car which was one of the finest and most expensive manufactured.

"Pretty well," I retorted, "but I can't afford it."

"Oh," he said, smiling, "haven't you heard that a Colonel Kirk is around town selling a number of these cars which he claims the Government purchased a short time back but have no use for now? They have several hundred of them at Fort McCameron, and are selling them at the ridiculously low price of $600, with only $200 down. At that price any one can own one."

"I'll take one," I decided.

"Wait. I've just ascertained from the quartermaster's corps at Fort McCameron that they have no cars of this make or any other make for sale."

"Ah, a swindle," I murmured.

"Looks like it," he replied, shedding his dressing-gown and donning his hat and coat with rapid movements, accompanied by his customary gay mannerisms, which to me had become part of his personality, but to most people marked him as eccentric. "Come with me. We'll find out."

He picked up the gold-knobbed cane he always carried and together we left the house. His roadster was standing in the driveway. We stepped in, and he took the wheel, driving rapidly across town till we came to a tall office building where yellowish lights gleamed in several of the windows.

The elevator took us to the second floor. We made our way down the corridor to an office where a middle-aged, gray-haired man sat at a desk.

"This is Mr. Thompson, a very good friend of mine. Mr. Thompson, Mr. Darcey," introduced Scott. "Thompson has arranged to purchase one of these automobiles I was speaking about," the detective explained. Then he drew me into an inner room, where we waited, being curiously sit-

uated where we could see and hear all that went on in the outer room without being seen ourselves.

We had waited only a few minutes when the door of the outer office opened. In my surprise I almost disclosed our presence. It was Milton, alias The Fox, prince of bunco artists. Scott evidently was not so astonished as I. I heard Thompson addressing him as Colonel Kirk. I was absolutely certain now that it was a swindling deal.

"Here is my check for $200," said Thompson, finally, as he tore it from his checkbook and handed it over to the bogus colonel.

At that instant Scott stepped forth.

"Sorry, old man," remarked the Crime Deflector, in genuine sympathy. "Hate to do it, but I'll have to escort you to the city Bastille."

"You're making a mistake."

"Hope so," said the detective.

Milton accompanied us downstairs to where the roadster waited. Scott drove to Central Station and turned him over to the police. I went on home.

About noon the next day I went around to the Crime Deflector's home. I was interested to hear how the case was coming on.

"He's out already," announced Scott.

"What?" I ejaculated, thinking probably he had broken jail.

"The District Attorney ordered his release."

"Why?" I asked.

"I'll tell you why. Because there had been no crime committed. Milton had sold five hundred automobiles, collecting a two-hundred-dollar check on each. He put the $100,000 in escrow at the Citizens Trust and Savings. With the escrow department of the bank he left a document with these terms: 'I agree to deliver one automobile described above within sixty days to each party herein mentioned. If said automobile is not delivered the bank is instructed to return the money to all of the various parties concerned.' He had not appropriated a cent for his own use. The only thing he did was to tell a lie about the Government having these cars for sale. You can't send a man to prison for telling a lie, can you? I thought perhaps I could arrest him for representing himself to be a Government official, so I got the Federal officers after him, but they find he did not represent himself to be an agent of the Government, but merely a private individual handling the cars for the Government."

"But how did he expect to profit by the scheme?" I asked, "if he put all the money in escrow with instructions to the bank to return it to the people if they failed to get their cars?"

"An escrow manager is easily satisfied. No doubt Milton intended to forge the names of the different parties whose checks the bank held, to a number of receipts, turn them over to the bank, and the latter without investigating would probably issue him a cashier's check for the entire amount."

"He's pretty shrewd," I said. "You can't do a thing with him, but at any rate you'll save the citizens of Los Angeles about $100,000."

"And myself the price of a dinner at the Sunset Inn," added Scott, grinning.

In the recent schemes devised by the famous bunco man he had not made a cent as far as I knew. It was only that which kept him within the law. Had the detective not frustrated them before they were fully consummated, Milton no doubt would be a fugitive from justice. I wondered if he was clever enough to actually make a pile of money and still be able to laugh at the police when they came to arrest him. The answer to my thoughts came in the shape of a theatre advertisement in all the newspapers the following morning.

The Rialto offered to give away, absolutely free, at each matinee and evening a certain number of lots. All tickets sold were to be enclosed in tiny envelopes, and in some of them would be inserted coupons good for free tracts of real estate. There were no strings attached to it; merely an advertising proposition to boom the theatre patronage.

We decided to go. Both Scott and I were very lucky, it seemed, for we each drew a coupon good for a lot somewhere up

in the central part of the state. I did not know exactly where the land was, but I was sure if it was in California it must be good; and, besides, you couldn't be too particular when some one is making you a present.

Scott, always curious, had the nerve to stop several people. Every one he questioned had drawn a lucky number. It began to dawn upon me that every one who went into the show was getting a free lot.

Instructions on the back of the lucky coupon advised us to call at No. 432 South Broadway, where we were to obtain the deed which gave us legal possession of the land, on which we were to build our future bungalow. I brightened perceptibly at the thought that I might soon quit paying rent.

Arriving at the address designated, who should we see but our friend Red Milton, the crook. He greeted us warmly, evidently somewhat amused at our coming. I decided he would soon be laughing in another way. We watched him while he waited on a customer. When he had finished writing out the deed and filling in all the necessary papers, blanks and forms, he said: "I charge a little fee for my time and the trouble of making out the papers." He cleared his throat. "A mere $25—a trifle. Of course if you don't want the lot——"

But who would refuse a piece of our wonderful state for such a nominal fee? We did not see a single person who declined to pay.

When ultimately we were alone and Milton had collected so many twenty-five dollar fees that he made us both feel like paupers, he turned to us and said: "Boys, you've got nothing on me this time."

"Are those genuine lots you are giving away?" asked Scott.

"Absolutely," was his answer. "I bought a few acres of worthless land up in the mountains—in the heart of the High Sierras—and subdivided it into a few thousand lots. I figure each lot cost me about a dollar and ten cents. I don't say they're any good. But you can't kick, can you, when you're getting them for nothing?"

"N-no, but the twenty-five dollars?"

"Well, my time and trouble ought to be worth something. If I want to charge a fee and if they want to pay it, that's my business, isn't it? There's no law against that, is there?"

We could see the logic in the swindler's argument. Scott had to admit defeat.

"I won't bother you any more for a' while," promised Milton. "I've cleaned up enough on this to live comfortably for some time. And that's all I ask—a comfortable living. By the way, when are you going to take me out to Sunset Inn on that wonderful little dinner party?"

CONTROL OF DETECTIVE AGENCIES

ASSEMBLYMAN ARTHUR I. MILLER of Yonkers recently prepared a bill for introduction providing that all private detective agencies in this State shall be put under jurisdiction of the office of the State Attorney-General. The legislator previously introduced a companion measure to this prohibiting private operatives from obtaining evidence designed for use in divorce actions.

"I prepared this legislation," said Mr. Miller, "after being informed that all kinds of blackmail was being committed under present laws. A man can hire a private detective to watch his wife and the detective can go to the wife and tell her that unless she pays him a certain sum he will expose her. They also can go to the man suspected and shake him down. Some of the private detectives have been known to go so far as to permit themselves to be named as witnesses with a view to collecting money from the person actually guilty.

"The law should stop gathering of evidence by unofficial private agencies. I have conferred with Attorney-General Sherman on the matter, and my bill provides that in the future all private detectives shall be registered at his office and responsible to him."

The Last of the Gangsters

By POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD

FOR a great many years the police departments of various cities have continued a terrific fight to suppress the gangs of lawless characters who prey upon all the law-abiding citizens they have marked for attack. These gangs have always been led by a crook of forceful character and superior intelligence in the commission of crime, upon whom the police lay most of the responsibility. To capture these leaders with enough incriminating evidence to convict them has always been the chief aim of our police. They figure that it is easiest to stamp out crime by getting at its source, and as gang leaders engineer most of the lawlessness of their followers, the power of the gang is broken when its leader is behind the bars. But it is often difficult to arrest these men, as they invariably are armed with false alibis, are defended by their followers, or are hidden by their friends.

Like "Monk" Eastman, "Gimpy" Jackson and a number of equally as familiar leaders, they have flourished for a time, served short sentences and finally came to a violent end of their careers. In most instances they were killed, but not by the police. Somehow these fatal tragedies were brought about by their rivals of the underworld. One of the most notorious of these feud victims of recent date was Bill Lovett, who held sway over the waterfront section of Brooklyn. His enemies had tried a dozen times to kill him. Two years ago he aroused the anger of a rival gangster and they shot him down near the river during the night. There were two bullets fired into his body. The deed was attributed to a rival gangster known as Denny Meehan. But shortly after Lovett recovered the notorious Meehan was killed, and the police had a strong suspicion that Lovett committed the crime out of revenge, but they never could prove it. A year later Lovett was again shot down in a ramshackle shanty behind No. 289 Front street, into which he was lured. When the police searched the shanty they found several hundred bottles of home-brew ale scattered around, and a couple of automatic pistol cartridges. Lovett recovered, to everybody's amazement. He refused to say who shot him, but declared the attack was made at Gold and Front streets, and said he had been carried to the shack.

No one could understand the luck of a man who could live with five or six bullets in his body, and his enemies probably decided that he was immune to pistol shots. As his enemies had made up their minds to kill him, they decided on another way. When Lovett got out of the hospital he broadcast the information that he had reformed, as he was sick of being accused of every crime committed in his neighborhood. The police took his reform statement with a grain of salt, for he had figured pretty prominently in the courts on one charge or another in the past.

The record of the gangster as summarized by the police follows:

October 13, 1908, assault and robbery; discharged. September 12, 1910, disorderly conduct; sentence suspended. September 13, 1910, disorderly conduct; six months. August 11, 1911, assault; thirty days. February 27, 1914, assault and robbery; discharged. April 7, 1914, burglary; discharged. August 15, 1914, felonious assault; discharged. October 15, 1915, grand larceny; discharged. April 24, 1916, assault and robbery; discharged. July 26, 1916, grand larceny; discharged. November 12, 1916, murder; acquitted by a jury. October 20, 1919, felonious assault, dis-

charged. June 4, 1920, felonious assault; discharged. December 5, 1922, murder of Daniel Gillen of 53 Jay street, Brooklyn; discharged. May 6, 1923, murder (victim not named in police bulletin); discharged.

The police neglected to add to Lovett's record his service in France. Lovett, like a great many gangsters, was a volunteer soldier. He and other gangsters made good fighters because of their daring and their reckless disregard for human life.

When Lovett married Anna Lonergan the public had some hope for his reform. It was at his wedding that his bride proclaimed his reform.

"If there's crimes going on in the next couple of weeks," she said to the guests, "you'll know Bill Lovett and his wife are at Long Beach, and had nothing to do with them."

"And when we get back," added Bill, "I'm going to work in the insurance business, and live down this gangster stuff."

Gone a month, Bill and his bride returned, and some one promptly tipped off the police that he was back in his old haunts.

"There's going to be trouble around 25 Bridge street for Lovett," was the phone message, and patrolman Ryan of the Poplar street station was ordered to examine the premises mentioned every day. This house was two blocks from the rendezvous of the Lovett gang, a three-story brick building serving as a warehouse. The rear room was a hangout for jobless denizens of the wharfs. It was here that the police found Lovett lying huddled on the floor one night with two bullets through his neck and his skull fractured from heavy blows of a blackjack. There were two windows in the room opening into a small rear yard through which the murderers evidently made their escape. An old barrel skid was propped against the wall of an adjacent building, its top five feet from a fire escape, up which the killers might have gone. As no weapons were found on the slain gangster it was inferred that he was either unarmed or his enemies had taken his gun away from him. Arrested suspects claimed that Lovett had been drinking heavily and was left in the room by his cronies sleeping off his debauch.

It was just the usual ending of men of his kind.

On the night of October 24, 1921, a United States mail truck was held up and robbed of a number of registered mail pouches on Leonard street, between Broadway and West Broadway. The thieves abstracted bonds from the pouches to the value of $1,600,000. This robbery was committed by the fastidious gang leader George Anderson and two of his pals named Gerald Chapman and William Loerber. The gang leader was of a different type from the rough Bill Lovett. Anderson and Chapman were classy crooks, who were models of fashion, lived in the finest hotels and enjoyed all the luxuries of life. They were very clever and dangerous men. When the Secret Service officers nabbed Loerber he turned state's evidence by confessing, and his disclosures led to the recovery of one-third of the stolen goods. A keen pursuit of Anderson and Chapman followed. According to Loerber, a month before the mail truck was robbed he, Anderson and Chapman watched the City Hall post-office night after night from the concealment of a green motor car. Each night they saw the truck Frank Havraneck drove get its load of mail pouches and move off. They followed, noting the route of the truck as it went uptown to the general post-office, and thus learned every habit of the truckman in picking his route.

On the night selected by the crooks their car went along beside the truck for several blocks. At Worth street Anderson and Chapman, elegantly clad, sprang from their car to the higher seat of the truck and jammed their guns against Havraneck.

"Turn down Leonard street!" ordered Anderson, and when the truckman complied, he was finally ordered to stop. They then took the truck door key away from him, knocked him out, and got away with the registered pouch in the gloom. When the driver revived and told his story the whole force of the United States Government was exerted to capture the bold thieves, but months passed before anything

tangible was developed, as all three crooks had vanished. Then an American Express detective named Gordon T. McCarthy, who had been searching for the perpetrators of a robbery at Niagara Falls, learned that Loerber was concerned in it and nabbed him when he presented an express order. The detective knew nothing about the mail truck robbery in New York. But he learned something about Loerber's pals, and the government officers prepared to trap Chapman, who, they learned, had opened an account with a large stock brokerage house, and used some of the stolen securities as collateral. Then Chapman and Anderson went to Philadelphia, secured a letter of introduction, and pledged $345,000 of the stolen bonds with a bank for a loan of $275,000. It was found by the bankers that the numbers on some of the bonds had been altered. A raid was made on Chapman's apartment, and the detectives found there the paraphernalia for changing numbers. When Chapman came in they arrested him and his wife, and they were taken to the post-office for examination. Anderson was also captured. While Chapman was being questioned he stood near an open window. Suddenly he shouted:

"I might as well end it this way!"

He went out the open window, several stories above the street, and disappeared. The post-office inspectors and detectives were horrified, as they inferred that he had killed himself. Looking out the window, they could not see the crook or his body. That aroused suspicion, and a search was made. It ended in finding Chapman hiding behind some boxes in an office close by. He had merely gone along a ledge of stone on the face of the building and climbed in the next window. He expected to escape when the excitement abated. At his trial, when asked what prompted him to attempt to get away, he answered:

"Because you had my wife in a room grilling her for hours, until she was nearly a wreck."

Chapman and Anderson were convicted and sentenced to twenty-five years in the Federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Ga., but Chapman did not intend to waste quarter of a century in prison. Somehow he got a saw, then he plotted with a convict named Frank Gray. Eight months after he was imprisoned he and Gray overpowered the guard in the hospital ward, sawed through a steel barred window, made ropes of bed sheets knotted together, and slid to the ground thirty feet below. Then they climbed over two high walls and raced away. But they did not get very far before the prison guards were after them. Two days later Chapman fell with three bullets in his body. They had him back in prison within forty-eight hours. Badly wounded, he was confined in the hospital. At the end of three weeks he cunningly took advantage of a short absence of the guard, who had been sleeping in the same room. Putting on the guard's clothes, and using his bed covering as a rope, he slid to the ground. They put detectives and bloodhounds on his trail, but he eluded them. Two nights afterward a nurse told one of the special guards that she heard strange sounds in the basement. The man investigated. As he switched on the lights there sat Chapman on a sewer pipe.

The guard seized him and the nurse screamed and fainted. While the guard was attending to her Chapman walked out the door, and hasn't been seen since. He had been heard to say that if he got away he would help Anderson to escape, and he apparently made good, for it was not long afterward that Anderson disappeared from the prison, too. The escape of these two crooks created a tremendous furor. Detectives were sent in every direction to find and bring them back. Anderson and several other convicts had escaped by crawling through a very narrow tunnel fifty feet long, which passed under the prison walls. The authorities were convinced from appearances that the prisoners had outside aid. No such excavation could possibly have been made by the convicts, as there seldom was a moment when they were not closely watched by armed keepers. When the search began a number of suspects were brought in for examination. Among those arrested were two men who were believed to have aided the crooks and supplied

them with money, but for lack of evidence they were discharged. Another clue cropped up in New York when a small robbery occurred, which bore all the earmarks of Chapman's style of work.

It was noted that one of the parties involved bore a resemblance to Chapman, and had a limp. Now, when Chapman escaped he was barefooted, and quite a dreadful looking object. He was in bad physical shape, but his mind was alert enough. When normal he had been about 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighed 140 pounds and his features were thin, with high cheek bones. His chin and forehead sloped back sharply, and he wore glasses. His age was about 35 years, and his appearance was that of a student. One of the men concerned in the bond robbery matched this description. He was described as a slim man with a limp, who wore eyeglasses. The stolen bonds, the detectives learned, were to have changed hands in Central Park, and preparations for an arrest were made. At the time the slim man with eyeglasses appeared at the appointed place in a car to take the stolen securities from two other men in another automobile, the officers made a rush, there was a row, and during the fight the man with glasses got away, although the two other crooks were captured. No one was sure that the one who escaped was Chapman, although he looked like the fugitive from Altanta.

Both Chapman and Anderson may still be at large, and if they are, every moment of their lives is filled with danger, for the vigilance of the United States Secret Service is relentless; it never wanes, and if it takes years, they will get these two crooks.

Another gangster who recently came to grief was a young Italian whose talents might have made a notable man of him had he not succumbed to the lure of the get-rich-quick bug. As a youth he was leader of a gang, and as he grew older he developed a talent for inventing. His name was Salvatore Mangiapane and by profession he was a skilled photographer. About a year ago, however, he invented a sausage-making machine, but did not have the capital to manufacture and market it in quantity. About that time he fell in with Mario Olivari, Nick Gloriani, Frank Reubeto and Frank Raymond. Olivari was an expert engraver, and Reubeto skilled at making dies. They had learned their trades in Switzerland and gained entrance to this country through Mexico. They all went to Blue Island, Ill., and there Mangiapane and his gang began hatching a plot to enrich themselves. They fell under the suspicions of Secret Service Agent Gabriel DiFiore, and he began watching them. Some counterfeits had been shown in Chicago, and he had an idea they knew something about them. In fact, he traced some bills that were passed by this gang, but could not get evidence enough to warrant an arrest for some time, as the men were pretty cautious. Finally Gloriani and Reubeto went to Chicago and the rest came to New York and were soon working on the sausage-making machine in Mangiapane's place. Agent DiFiore never lost track of them. Indeed, in hunting up Mangiapane's record he discovered that the man had four wives.

It took the gang nearly a year to perfect their plans, and eventually they established a plant in Raymond's house and began printing counterfeit bills. These were sent to Chicago for Gloriani and Reubeto to "shove the queer." The Windy City was first to see the spurious banknotes. The fake money was sent from the sausage machine, and the apparatus served as a secret code between the men in Chicago and New York.

Agent Joseph A. Palma took charge of the capture of the men who were floating the counterfeits, and noted that they were $20 bills on the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. Only a few had thus far been put in circulation. DiFiore never lost track of the gang, and had reason to believe they were the men who were responsible for the counterfeits. Finally the detective decided to verify his suspicions, securing search warrants, and arming a number of assistants. DiFiore suddenly made a raid on Raymond's house and nabbed the three men.

Mangiapane had a revolver in his pocket, but had no time to use it. A tele-

gram had been flashed to the Chicago operatives who were watching Gloriani and Reubeto, and they were arrested at the same time. After the men were secured a search of Raymond's rooms revealed two printing presses, plates, negatives, inks and other materials for making counterfeits. When the detectives searched Mangiapane's apartment they found a number of the counterfeit bills, two reams of paper for printing them, and some chemicals with which to treat the finished product.

Of course the prisoners were grilled and, seeing that the evidence against them was irrefutable, they broke down and confessed.

"We only printed $400," Mangiapane admitted, "and a much smaller amount than that were put in circulation. The fact is, we printed the first lot in Chicago, but quarreled over the division and split. I only intended to print enough of the fake money to start manufacturing the sausage machines."

That he was lying was established afterward when one of the gang confessed that it was their design to issue enough of the fake bills to make millionaires of them. The few bills in circulation were gathered up and indictments of the men arrested were asked of the Federal Grand Jury. And thus were the criminal careers of some of the latest gangsters brought to a decisive climax.

MYSTERY IN MAIL THEFT

"THE million-dollar mail robbery" in Chicago appears to have plunged the police into a dense fog. The Post-office agents do not take much interest in the results so far obtained by Police Chief Collins. Federal Inspector Germer thinks "Jimmy" Murray, former politician and present beer distributor, who the police hold as a leader in the train hold-up, had nothing to do with it, and that J. H. Wayne, a wounded man found in the McComb flat, was shot in a bootlegging war.

The thousand-dollar bills found on them were the direct profit of beer running, he asserts, and not money stolen in the mail raid. The police assert at least two of the robbers are in their custody.

"We're groping around in the dark right now in trying to arrest others," said Chief Collins. "Two of the men in custody actually took part in robbing the train. We have some promising leads."

Five men and two women are under arrest and all of them, the police suspect, know where the stolen fortune is hidden.

Recovery of a large part of the loot, however, is predicted by detectives and Federal agents, who believe it has been cached in the vicinity of Fox Lake. Squads of county police and deputy sheriffs scour the woods in the northern part of Lake County.

Four Lake County deputy sheriffs started with picks and shovels at the scene of the robbery, the Buckley Road crossing two miles north of Rondout, and pecked away in adjoining fields wherever the surface looked as if it had been recently upturned. The orders were to keep at it until the treasure was found.

A squad of Chicago detectives started a thorough search of the resort region around Fox Lake. Several old ice houses were first on their program.

Lieut. John Norton and his Detective Bureau squad returned from a tour of Fox, Crystal and Long Lakes, where they spent two days in a fruitless search for the plunder.

"We have important clues which we believe will lead to the solution of the mystery," they said. "To say more would be to work against ourselves."

A Test of Conscience

By J. B. WARRENTON

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE old one-story-and-a-half wooden building was a well-known landmark in Boston.

For over thirty years it had housed Seth Hixon, dealer in antiques, who made money lending as a side line. The only other occupant of his dingy store was his daughter Mildred. They lived above the salesroom.

Hixon was past sixty, tall and lean and bald to the nape of his neck. Although a rich miser, he spared no money to educate and clothe his motherless daughter.

On Thursday afternoon in the late fall Seth Hixon was found murdered. His long body was sprawled across his paper-strewed desk, a tiny stream of blood oozing from a hole in the back of the head. The weapon lay on the faded carpet beside him —a heavy glass paperweight. A prospective customer discovered the crime and notified the police. Hixon's daughter was spending a few days with friends in the West End.

When the police arrived they took charge of the place. They saw at a glance that the stricken man was beyond medical aid and called up the coroner, who viewed the body and phoned his verdict to police headquarters.

"Orders," growled the Chief, as he hung up the phone receiver. The only man present stepped forward and saluted. "Go over to old Hixon's dump, near the ball park, Farley. Coroner Ross says he's been bumped off."

Detective Dan Farley touched his hat again and departed without asking a single question. That was his trump trait—silence.

Fifteen minutes later he pushed his way through a curious crowd gathered before the house of tragedy and stood gazing down at the sprawling figure. Never a word did he say, nor ask a question. Still mute, he examined the wound in the back of the dead's man head. Then he spoke:

"How long has he been dead, Mr. Ross?"

"About an hour at most," the coroner answered.

"Murder?"

"Positively, Mr. Farley."

For the next five minutes the officer's keen eyes were everywhere. Neither pencil nor pad did he use. What notes he made were purely mental. Then the coroner called his attention to the paperweight, which still rested on the worn carpet. It had not been disturbed. The uniformed police in charge didn't overlook the fact that fingerprints might be on it.

Gingerly Farley picked up the glass commodity and just as carefully wrapped it in an unused handkerchief, after fitting the edge of the wound in the dead man's head.

"You think this did the trick, Mr. Ross?" he ventured, looking up. "I don't see anything else lying around that would make a wound like that, and besides the edge fits pretty snug in the fracture. Of course," he resumed, his eyes roaming to every nook and cranny in the room, "there's a chance that the killer took the real weapon away. I see there was no attempt at robbery, or the assassin was frightened off before he could grab any loot."

He was turning the handle of the little, old-fashioned safe when he ventured the last remark.

"I *do* think that's the weapon that killed Mr. Hixon," asserted the coroner. "And I don't think robbery was the motive. But it's up to you, Mr. Farley, to

find that out," he finished with a frindly smile.

Dan Farley did convince himself that there had been no robbery. He alsoconcluded that the murderer was either known to the dead money-lender, or that he was a customer and had caught the old man off his guard. The detective had known Seth Hixon for nearly twenty years. He knew him to be a careful man, always on the alert, and he had a handy revolver in his store, and could use it, too.

When the body was removed by order of the coroner the detective took up the task of searching for some clue that might give him a start. When that was done he would have the paperweight dusted and photographed for fingerprints. His quest was fruitless, and he was about to leave some orders with the policeman on guard inside when he heard a commotion outside the door and a female voice demanding admission. Investigating, he found an irate woman remonstrating with the officer at the door.

"What's the matter?" inquired the Headquarters man; then as the woman turned, "Oh, it's you, Miss Smith; just the person I want to see. All right, Kelley"—this to the policeman—"she's part of this establishment."

Inside, Margaret Smith looked with staring eyes at the other policeman. Like a frightened child she hung to the detective's arm.

"Why—why," she gasped, "what's happened? Why are these officers here? Where's Mr. Hixon?"

Farley waited until her broadside of questions had ceased, then motioned her to a seat, into which she lowered herself reluctantly.

"Mr. Hixon has been murdered, and I'm here to find, if possible, a clue to the one that did it. Now don't get excited and faint, please; I'm not going to blame you for it, but I'm simply going to ask you a few questions, trusting your replies may be of benefit."

The woman in the chair buried her face in her hands and sobbed. Farley paced the floor and waited calmly for the tempest of tears to abate. He knew men, and he knew women. Let them cry it out.

After several more minutes of sniffing and mopping of red-lidded eyes the woman looked up at the officer, who had halted before her. He then drew a chair close and began questioning her.

"How long have you been employed by Mr. Hixon, Miss Smith?"

His tone was kind and the woman in the chair took courage.

"Nearly nine years, officer," she said frankly, "and my duties were many. I did his typing, bookkeeping, and made loans and sales. Although somewhat stingy, he was a very kind and considerate employer."

Here she sniffed again and applied the sodden handkerchief to her eyes.

"Did you ever overhear any threats made to him, or do you know of any one who you might consider capable of doing a deed like that? Think well now, Miss Smith," urged the Headquarters man. "Your employer, who has always been kind and considerate to you, has been brutally murdered. The murderer was no stranger, or I've lost my theoretic ability. When did you leave the office? Did anything happen out of the ordinary that you remember? And, by the way," he sprang from the chair and started for the stairs leading to the little flat above the store, "where is his daughter? My God, she may be——"

"She's not upstairs, Mr. Farley," spoke up the policeman. "Me and Shine out there went all through the place when we arrived."

Farley, somewhat relieved at the information, returned to resume his interrogation. Margaret Smith smiled at his agitation, then put him at ease by stating:

"You needn't worry on Mildred's account; she's calling on friends in the West End. But don't you think, Mr. Farley, she should be notified at once?"

"I'll attend to that detail," returned the Headquarters man, "when you've answered my questions. Go on, please."

The late Seth Hixon's typist was silent for several minutes. Her brow was puckered and her eyes were nearly closed.

"Of course, Mr. Farley," she said, "a

man in Mr. Hixon's business has many enemies. Although an honest man, he drove a hard bargain, and that alone at times caused a number of his money-borrowing clients to curse him in their rage if he demanded payment when due. But I don't recall a single one that threatened him—not one. The only thing that occurred—I really consider it too insignificant to mention—the telephone rang as I was putting on my coat, at ten minutes after two, to go to lunch."

The Headquarters man raised his eyes and looked at her sharply, remarking:

"Rather late hour for lunch. Unusual? But go on, please."

"No, Mr. Farley," she continued, unruffled at the interruption, "nothing was unusual in Mr. Hixon's place. When there was work to be done there were no uniform hours. But, as I was saying about the phone ring. I answered it, and a voice on the wire asked if Mr. Hixon would be there for the next hour, as he wished to talk to him on business of the greatest importance. I turned to——"

Dan Farley was sitting erect in the chair, gripping the arms with fingers of steel.

"Excuse the interruption, Miss Smith," his voice vibrating with the tensity of his emotion, "but repeat every word carefully. Instead of this information being insignificant, I feel that we're getting 'warm,' as the children say in hide-the-button. You turned to——"

"I turned to Mr. Hixon," she resumed, "and delivered the message. He asked who was speaking. I questioned the man, and a voice that seemed as though it had a slight hoarseness replied that Robert Ducey was the speaker, although I would never have recognized it as his voice. I told him to hold the line, and then conveyed the information to Mr. Hixon. He growled and pondered for a moment or two, then ordered me to tell him to come. I did so, also remarking that he would be alone for the next hour. I then hung up and went out to my belated lunch."

"Who is this Robert Ducey?" demanded the Headquarters man, now on his feet and looking down on the woman. "One of his customers? And where does he live?"

"Oh, he didn't do it, Mr. Farley," she cried in alarm. "I hope I haven't said anything to hurt him."

Farley's voice was hard when he spoke again. He was no bully, but justice demands harshness at times.

"That's for me to find out, Miss Smith, and him to prove. Now please give me the information I asked. I can find out without your help, but the sooner Ducey and I have a little talk, the better for all concerned."

Margaret Smith cringed somewhat under his cold gaze, but rallied quickly as she noted that those steely eyes were not unkind.

"No, Mr. Ducey was not one of my late employer's customers. He is Mildred's intended husband, but Mr. Hixon objected to his marrying her, and they quarreled about it. He's a clerk in the Traders Bank and lives in the Allen Chambers, on Tremont Street."

The Headquarters man made a note of the information on a piece of paper taken from the desk, then said:

"Tell me what the quarrel was about?"

"About Mildred. Mr. Ducey asked the old gentleman if he could marry her. Hixon flew into a rage and threatened to kick Mr. Ducey out of the shop, telling him to go get a man's job, and quit holding an ink-slinger's position in a bank."

Farley became all keyed up at this piece of news. The motive was plain. Ducey, with malice in his heart at the treatment he had received from the girl's father, had probably sought another interview. Like the first, it was probably stormy. Old Hixon again ordered him from the store. Perhaps he turned away, completely ignoring him, seated himself at his desk and maybe looked over some papers to suppress his anger. Blind with rage, Robert Ducey may have snatched up the nearest implement, which happened to be the paperweight, and struck the fatal blow. Now, to arrest Ducey, get a copy of his fingerprints, and the murder of old Hixon would be solved in less than half a day.

Satisfied with his hypothesis of the case, Farley again addressed Miss Smith:

"It looks to me as if Ducey was the man," he remarked, "but I can't be sure till I question him and compare the finger-prints on the paperweight with his. If you can reach Mildred Hixon break the sad news to her lightly, and have her come to headquarters and see the Chief. I would also advise you not to talk too much for the newspaper reporters. You come to headquarters with the girl, as I want you to confront Ducey."

With a word or two in an undertone to the policeman inside, Dan Farley left the scene of the murder.

CHAPTER TWO

AT the Traders Bank twenty minutes later the headquarters man was not in the least surprised to learn from the chief clerk that Robert Ducey had been granted leave to discontinue his duties for the remainder of the day, owing to illness.

"How'd he look?" asked Farley, after making his identity known. "Bad enough to send him to bed?"

The chief clerk favored the detective with a stare, and answered somewhat loftily:

"Robert's illness was genuine, sir. Doctor Paul, an intimate friend of the young man, advised him to take the action that he did."

The headquarters man thanked him and left the bank.

A brisk walk brought him up standing before the Allen chambers on Tremont street. Nothing very sumptuous about the four-story brick building. Robert Ducey was surely living within his means as far as housing was concerned. He entered the vestibule and ran his eye over the names above the letterboxes. Suite 3 bore his name as one of the tenants. He ascended the stairs, rang the bell at the door designated, and in a few seconds the door was opened by a portly matron.

"I wish to see Robert Ducey," said Farley in a quiet tone. "Is he in?"

"He's in, sir," the portly one informed him, "but he's abed."

"I'll see him anyway," proclaimed the headquarters man, stepping inside, much to the good lady's vexation. "Where's his room?"

She was about to voice a protest at his intruding when he made himself known.

Before the door of a small bedroom at the rear of the house the officer and the landlady halted. With a wave of dismissal from the former the awed woman slowly retreated. Farley knocked. No one responded. He knocked again and, as he got the same result, he turned the knob and, finding the door unlocked, strode inside.

The occupant way lying covered up in bed, seemingly asleep.

"Wake up, Ducey!" roared the headquarters man, stepping to the side of the bed and shaking the sleeper by the shoulder. Ducey groaned, mumbled incoherently, slowly opened his eyes and blinked up at the speaker.

"Your name is Robert Ducey, isn't it?" asked Farley.

The young bank clerk sat bolt upright, perplexity written all over his flushed features.

"Why yes," he stammered. "Who are you, and what are you doing in my room?"

Farley looked into the raised eyes several seconds before he spoke.

"I'm from police headquarters. I want to talk with you a few minutes. How long have you been home and in bed?"

"Why—eh, I don't get you, sir," stuttered Ducey. "But I've been home since two o'clock. What's wrong?"

Still boring him with his cold eyes, Farley shook his head.

"Never left the bed or house since then? Then you don't know that old Seth Hixon was murdered? You don't——"

With a low cry Ducey hurled the bedcovering from him and swung his feet to the floor. Although his mental faculties seemed keen enough, his eyelids were heavy and his features expressionless and stupid.

"My God!" he finally cried out in alarm. "Mr. Hixon murdered, and—and—— My God, you aren't accusing me, are you?"

Again the headquarters man nodded his head, as if in answer to a mental question.

"I didn't say so, Ducey," he said slowly, turning his back on the young bank clerk, "but I'm not the whole works. You'd better get your clothes on and we'll take a walk over to headquarters. The air will brace you up, and perhaps you will be able to answer the few questions we are going to ask you more clearly."

"Then I'm under arrest?" Ducey asked dully.

"You might call it that for the present. Get your clothes on."

CHAPTER THREE

AT police headquarters young Ducey was ushered into the presence of the Chief. A stenographer was called in, also what plainclothes men who were at hand, three in number. This was his story:

He did quarrel with old Hixon a few days before, after he had asked him if he could marry Mildred. The old man objected on the grounds that his salary wasn't sufficient, and that he only wanted to marry the girl thinking that a big fortune awaited the lucky man, when he, Hixon, died. The result was the old money lender ordered him from the store.

"We want you to tell us how you spent today," demanded the Chief gruffly. "Especially since two o'clock."

"All the morning until eleven-forty-five I spent at the bank. Then I went out to lunch. At the entrance I met Dr. Niles Paul, and we went to the grill on State street and had lunch together. While I——"

"Who's this Doctor Paul?" put in the Chief.

"He's a physician with offices on Boylesston street. I first met him three months ago at a reception. Mildred Hixon introduced him to me, she having met him a month or so before. He's a——"

"That's all right, Ducey," interjected the Chief again; "tell us what happened at lunch."

Before taking up the thread of his story again the young bank clerk looked helplessly from one face to another. Never a smile of encouragement greeted his pleading look. Five stern-visaged men looked at him accusingly.

"While I was eating," he resumed, clearing his throat, "I happened to look up and noted that the doctor was searching me quite critically with his gaze. 'You look ill, Bob,' he said with much concern. 'What is your ailment?' I told him that I felt all right, outside of being a little tired from working overtime in the bank the past week. He shook his head, then suggested that I go to his office after we'd finished lunch, and he would look me over and give me some medicine. I reluctantly complied with his offer, arriving there around twelve-thirty. I stripped at his order, whereupon he examined my heart, lungs and took my blood pressure. He ordered me to grip and lift several articles.

"After I had dressed again he placed his hands on my shoulders and said: 'Bob, you're getting the flu, I fear. Don't be alarmed, though; I'm going to give you a pill and I want you to go home and to bed.' I told him that was impossible until I had reported back, as there was an hour or less unfinished work that must be done. He was very much against my doing so at first, but I insisted, and he consented under the condition that when I arrived home I would ring him up from the house before I went to my room. 'I want to be sure that you follow out my directions, as I feel responsible for you; not only professionally, but as a friend.'"

Ducey requested and was given a glass of water. Then he resumed:

"I promised, and went back to the bank. I told the chief clerk what Doctor Paul had said, and he told me to go as soon as I had a mind to. I left the bank at one-forty-five, arriving at my lodging house just as the clock in the church tower nearby was striking two. I called Doctor Paul up on the phone in the hall, received his cheerful "Snug up, now, and you'll feel better tomorrow. Good-by.' Then I went to my room, undressed, took the pill and went to bed. That's the last I remember till Mr.

Farley woke me up. That's the God's truth, gentlemen."

"Did you talk with your landlady before retiring?" asked the Chief.

"Yes, sir; I told her I wasn't feeling well, and she wanted to make me a hot drink."

A bell ringing beneath the Chief's desk brought the grilling to a temporary halt.

"See who it is, Farley," ordered the police head without taking his eyes off Ducey.

The detective left the room, returning a few minutes later.

"Mildred Hixon and Doctor Paul, Chief," he announced.

"Where's Miss Smith?"

"She's coming later."

At the mention of his sweetheart's name Robert Ducey sprang to his feet.

"Don't drag her into this, gentlemen!" he cried. "She's in sorrow enough without having her see my plight."

Farley was at his side now. His strong hand rested lightly on the prisoner's shoulder.

"Sit down, son," he ordered not unkindly. "We're not trying to fasten the crime on you; we're trying to find the murderer."

The young bank clerk sank into his chair as the headquarters man left the room again.

In less than a minute he returned, ushering in the murdered man's daughter and a tall, clean-limbed chap about thirty odd years old—Dr. Niles Paul.

The meeting between the lovers was pathetic. The girl sobbed out her faith in him, while he hoarsely protested his innocence. Doctor Paul, suave, debonair and faultlessly attired, stood at their side offering his condolence.

"It's outrageous," he protested indignantly. "I, as his physician, protest that my patient is unfit to suffer such an indignity. I know he's innocent, and stand ready to defend him to my last dollar! Cheer up, Bob, old boy; I'll see you through this pigheaded miscarriage of justice! I'll see——"

"That's plenty from you, Doctor!" thundered the Chief, who with the others present had been watching the touching tableau and listening to the doctor's scathing tirade. "Sit down! Ducey's not on trial here, and I want you to understand once and for all that there's no pig-headedness in this department! You corroborated his story, and that'll be all I care to hear from you. As for you, Miss Hixon, we have got in touch with the people with whom you were stopping, so what you know about the crime is only that your father is dead. Now, Doctor Paul, say your say, and have it over with."

The narrative the doctor told corresponded exactly with the one related by the young suspect. Mildred Hixon sobbed all the while, but could shed no light on the affair other than to say her father and Ducey had had a slight quarrel. Then Margaret Smith was announced. She repeated the telephone episode, not failing to add that the voice was unlike Mr. Ducey's.

All during the testimony Dan Farley's slitted eyes never left the doctor's face. Every move, every word he uttered was imprinted on the mind of that law-enforcer. When the Chief's voice broke in again the prisoner raised his eyes to the speaker.

"Ducey," said the Chief, his tone startling the girl who clung to her sweetheart's arm, "the evidence thus far presented is not enough to hold you. Sit down!" he snapped, as the young bank clerk sprang to his feet with a cry of joy, "I'm not through yet."

Ducey sank back, his face flushing.

"As I was saying," iterated the police head, "the evidence thus far presented is not enough to hold you, but there is one more item I must check up before I turn you loose. Garvin," this to one of the officers present, who quickly looked up, "take Mr. Ducey's fingerprints. You've no objection, have you, Ducey?"

The suspected man shook his head. As he had no option in the matter, he might just as well agree as refuse.

His fingerprints were duly taken, then Inspector Garvin left the room. Only a desultory discourse between the suspect and his three friends broke the ominous silence. The grim-faced officers neither spoke nor exchanged glances. The minute-hand of the wall-clock had traveled nearly halfway

around the dial before Garvin again stepped into the room and handed the Chief two cards.

The Chief gazed steadily at the pieces of pasteboard. Slowly he raised his head and motioned his men to his side. Heads bobbed as each in turn looked upon the cards. Then the Chief's eyes strayed to the accused and rested there.

"Ducey," he began, his voice hard and condemnatory, "the last item checked up in your alibi has failed us! See this!" he bellowed, springing from his chair and towering over the prisoner, at the same time shoving a glass paperweight under his nose. "That's the weapon which killed old Hixon! Do you understand me? Killed—murdered, old Seth Hixon! That's the weapon *you* killed him with! Tell the truth! You did it! Come clean, Ducey, for we've got you anyway! You won't talk, eh? Well, you don't have to! We got you dead to rights, young fellow, 'cause the fingerprints we found on this weight that *you* murdered Hixon with correspond exactly *with* yours!"

His eyes popping from their sockets, his face ghastly, the accused bank clerk sat dazed. At the termination of the Chief's accusation Mildred Hixon moaned and fainted. Doctor Paul sprang from his chair and caught her in his arms, gently seating her on a bench, and patted her hands while an inspector went after water. Although stunned by the horrible charge, Ducey soon rallied and struggled to his feet, his voice trembling, his face white to the lips.

"It's a lie!" he screamed. "A damnable lie! I never struck the blow that killed Mr. Hixon, nor did I ever handle that paperweight! I was home in bed. Doctor Paul can prove that; also my landlady. I never went near Mr. Hixon's store or office today. I didn't do it. My God, won't you believe——"

"Take him away!" ordered the Chief.

Three officers seized Ducey and dragged him away still protesting his innocence. Dan Farley remained behind. Mildred Hixon had recovered from her faint, and at a few words of dismissal from the Chief was assisted outside by Doctor Paul and the Smith woman.

"There will be a hearing tomorrow morning. See that you three are there."

This warning was flung at them by the Chief as they departed.

(*Concluded in our next issue.*)

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN LED A CROOK GANG

"THE Black Thrush" is the name which the criminal world has given to a beautiful German woman who has been arrested in Bucharest on the charge of heading a gang of counterfeiters which operated in Jassy and flooded all central Europe with counterfeit $100 bills and other bad money.

Fraulein Josephine Durmand is the woman's real name. She is a native of Berlin, but has confined her activities chiefly to the south of Europe, where she was known as Baroness Schattenheim and by various other names. She is now about 30 years old and began to figure in police circles of Vienna when she was only 18 and later moved to Italy. She became well known about gaming clubs and was in many escapades. Being able to speak six languages she moved about with great ease.

During the war Josephine served as a French spy in Germany. She was arrested in Berlin, but a guard fell in love with her and with his aid she was able to escape. The guard was sentenced to death by a court martial.

Fraulein Durmand came to Bucharest two years ago with a false passport. She met many old associates who were living in Jassy and is supposed to have organized the gang of crooks which began printing bad money on a large scale. Fraulein Durmand was arrested in a hotel at Klausenburg.

Proverbs and a Cash Box

By B. M. GOLDENBERGER

WHEN I went on the witness stand, and by my truthful testimony kept "Lefty" Gordon from being sent to the pen for something he didn't do, how was I to know one of his crook pals was trying to frame him? Not a chance. But when the gang got so scorched at me that they heated the atmosphere wherever I went, I got wised up a-plenty. I left my old home rather than take the beating they would hang on me sooner or later. As the train hauled me away from the scenes of my childhood I made up my mind to "Keep my eyes open and my mouth shut." Nice, sensible saying, ain't it? Yes it is. These old sayings are the berries on paper, or sound nice if you want to make a wise crack, but they work both ways. You know, like a punching bag—come back and sock you on the nose. By following this mouth-shut idea I worked myself right smack into another jam.

Listen, and I'll tell you how it came off. You see, I'd been working in the office of Kupmeyer's department store in Middlesex since I left the home-fires until a few weeks ago. The dump ain't big enough for a store dick, so all the people who swipe things when no one is looking are grabbed off by the floor-walker or Kupmeyer himself.

One night, just before closing time, old Kup. drags a swell-looking jane into the office and makes her unload a lot of unpaid-for silk stockings. He makes a grab for the phone to call the cops, but is stopped by a guy that walks in unannounced.

"Just a minute, Mr. Kupmeyer," says this bird, holding up his hand pompous like. Then he flashes a detective badge. "Mr. Curry is my name. I am an operative of the Ryan Detective Agency. I have been on the trail of this young woman for some time. This is an occurrence that I had not foreseen. Here is a warrant for her arrest on a much more serious charge than larceny. Your charge at this time will materially complicate matters. If you can see your way to drop your charge for the present, I will be able to give her what she really deserves; otherwise, by being overzealous through your naturally righteous indignation, Mr. Kupmeyer, you will actually be defeating justice. Do you care to turn her over to me?"

Right here the girl lets out a squawk and beats it over to the boss. "Don't let him take me! Oh, Mister, Mister! Don't let him take me! I took your stockings; call the police and give me a chance! Give me a chance!"

That settled the flint-hearted Kupmeyer, and the old tightwad says: "Sure, Mr. Policeman, I will be generous with you. Take her, and I hope it learns her a lesson not to steal things from my store."

The moll turns on the weeps and spills tears all over the desk papers and black tin cash-box containing the day's receipts.

Then the dick says:

"Martha Kelly, alias Marie Fountaine, I place you under arrest for——" and he reads a lot of legal-sounding stuff from an important-looking paper.

The whole gag looked phony to me, but why should I horn in? The dick takes Kup. by the arm, saying:

"I must commend you on your perspicacity and intelligence, Mr. Kupmeyer. Without question our head office will show their appreciation to you in a substantial manner."

He talked so fast till they got to the door that Kupie didn't have a chance to notice

that the girl walked funny. Her skirt bulged out as though she were carrying a whole box of socks. Yes, I'm still sticking to keeping my mouth shut, and don't peep a word.

I was done for the day, and after seeing the Ryan Detective Agency representative get the girl into a cab, and the boss go back into the store, I piled on the street car bound for my boarding-house.

In the middle of my supper in walked two Middlesex officers of the law, and walked me to the police station. They don't tell me nothing but "Come along, the Chief wants to see you."

The first thing I see there is Kupmeyer's ugly mug. Was he mad? So mad I couldn't understand what he says at first.

"Where is my money? Where is my cash-box?" he yells. Finally the Chief explains Kup.'s gurgles, and the secret is out. When the boss picked up the cash-box to put it in the safe, it felt light. When he looks it over he finds it ain't his. Busting it open, there ain't no dough—just old newspapers. Nobody but yours truly had access to that office, so I must have put on the switch. Yes, I'm IT. Some quick thinking brings me a mental picture of the Ryan detective leading the girl with the funny walk and bulging skirt out of the store.

"Mr. Kupmeyer," says I, "I know I didn't take your money, but as there were two other people in the office, one of them must have taken it."

"Why?" says he. In his excitement he had forgotten all about the Ryan outfit.

"That shoplifter and cop," says I.

"What policeman?" snorts one flat-foot.

"Why, the fake detective."

Then the fireworks began. When things quieted down and it sunk into Kupie's ivory that there was no Ryan agency, he saw he had been gyped.

The Chief was a wise guy. Instead of wasting time chewing the rag he sends a couple of cops to the depot where they nabbed the two crooks before they had a chance to blow, and recovered the swag.

How can a fellow tell when to keep still and when to talk? Too deep for me.

ESCAPE FROM DETENTION PEN

EDWARD McNALLY, under $30,000 bail on a charge of felonious assault, lifted a marble slab in the floor of the detention pen in Fifth Avenue Court, Brooklyn recently, dropped into the cellar, scaled the wall and escaped. William Cabura, awaiting arraignment on a lesser charge, also took McNally's route to freedom. Then the leakage of prisoners was discovered, and the other eleven men in the pen remained there.

A general alarm was sent out for McNally, who is wanted also for violation of parole. He is twenty-one, a chauffeur and lives in Brooklyn.

McNally was arrested April 16 in Brooklyn, after two patrolmen had had a revolver battle with five men they said were acting suspiciously, and fled when the patrolmen started to question them. A hearing in his case had been postponed to June 23, and he was awaiting transfer to Raymond street jail.

The court attendants got their first inkling of what was going on when James Kennedy rushed in and told Chief Clerk Cummings he had seen a man clambering over the fence.

The two were able to conceal their movements from Clarance Ward, attendant in charge of the pen, because Ward's view was cut off by a screen surrounding the washroom.

Cabura is twenty-three. He had been charged with stealing two suits of clothes from a shop.

The Girl in the Red Mask

By DAVID F. GALVIN

IT was an exceedingly dark night. The starless sky had every indication of rain, while every now and then the low rumbling of thunder could be heard. Dustin Wayne, the detective, and his assistant, Larry Brousseau, has just returned from the theatre. As they entered their home Mrs. Hawkins, the housekeeper, met them in the hall.

"There's a young man waiting in the reception-room to see you, sir," she said to Wayne.

"How long has he been here?" asked the detective with a surprised expression.

"About twenty minutes, sir," she replied.

"Very well," said Wayne, dismissing her with a nod of his head, "I hope it's something important, Brousseau."

"Probably is," answered Brousseau, looking at his watch. "It's almost midnight. He would not have called at this late hour unless his business was most urgent."

A few minutes later they entered the reception-room. Their visitor was a young man of about six-and-twenty, with a tall, slender figure, red hair and blue eyes. At a glance Wayne took a sudden dislike to him. There was something in the expression of his eyes that did not invite friendship or inspire confidence. He had the face of one with criminal tendencies, and Wayne had a clear recollection of having met him before.

"Good-evening," said Wayne. "You wish to see me?"

The man bowed. "If you are Dustin Wayne—yes."

Wayne nodded his head. "That is my name," he answered.

"You can do me a great service, sir, if you will," and as the stranger said this he cast an inquiring glance at Wayne.

"Please tell me what you want," replied the detective, eyeing him narrowly.

"There's a lot you can do for me, sir!" exclaimed the young man quickly. "My case is a very peculiar one. The fact is, I hardly know where to begin—or what to tell you first."

"It will be best," said Wayne, "if you begin at the beginning and tell us everything."

"Well, then," said the young man, "my name is Clive Foley, and I am a resident of Ballad Vale. When I first went there, about four years ago, I didn't have enough money to buy a postage-stamp, and was as hungry as a church mouse. I knocked around for a day or two and finally got a job. I hadn't been in that town very long before I began to like the place, and I started to save some money. Today I am the proprietor of one of the biggest stores in Ballad Vale. Well, to make a long story short, I received a letter this morning that interested me very much. When I opened it I detected a faint odor of violets. The writing was evidently that of a girl. Now, before I say anything else, I would like to have you read this letter." He took several envelopes from his pocket and, handing one of them to Wayne, he added: "This is the one, sir." The detective read the letter, and gave it to Brosseau to peruse. This is what it said:

"MR. FOLEY: Tomorrow night at nine o'clock you will die! Don't think you can escape. If you run away I shall follow you. Tell the police—tell everybody! But they can't save you. You will perish just as sure as the sun will rise. You sent my

father to his death. I have sworn vengeance. Nobody can save you.

"Yours with hate!

"THE GIRL IN THE RED MASK."

After reading the letter Brousseau gave it back to Foley.

"Now that both of you have seen this letter," said Foley, "I will tell you something about the girl. About two months ago her father was arrested and convicted for killing Officer Ryan of Ballad Vale. At the time he shot Ryan I was the only witness who saw him do it. Now, that's where the girl comes into the affair. She knew that my evidence would send her father to the chair. She pleaded with me to leave town in order not to appear in court against her father. But I didn't go away—why should I? Her father paid the penalty for his crime last week. And now, Mr. Wayne, here's what I want you to do:

Tomorrow night I want you to be with me when this girl comes to my home, and we'll give her the surprise of her life! I will return to Ballad Vale tonight, and——"

"That would never do," said Wayne, interrupting him. "I suggest that you remain here tonight, if you will."

Foley considered a moment and looked sorely disappointed.

"If you insist." But it was quite evident to Wayne that he consented reluctantly.

For several minutes they were silent. Wayne lit a cigarette. A telephone rang sharply in an adjoining room, and a few seconds later Mrs. Hawkins entered the reception-room. Turning to Wayne, she said:

"Telephone call from the chief of police of Ballad Vale, and——"

But she never finished, for Foley suddenly sprang to his feet, his face livid with rage. He whipped a black automatic from his pocket and pointed it at Wayne. Before he could pull the trigger the detective sprang at him. With a quick movement of his hand Wayne knocked Foley's arm to one side just as Brousseau hit him squarely in the face. Before Foley could recover from the blow Brousseau hit his again. As Wayne wrenched the gun from his hand Foley sank in a limp heap on the floor unconscious.

"Put the handcuffs on him," said Wayne, leaving the room to answer the telephone.

"Hello!" called Wayne a few seconds later, as he raised the receiver to his ear.

"By thunder!" exclaimed a voice at the other end of the wire. "It's about time you answered! Listen, Wayne. Has a fellow come to your house calling himself Foley?"

"Yes."

"Is he there now?"

"Yes. He tried to get the drop on me, so I had to handcuff him. He's quite harmless now."

"Harmless!" exclaimed the Chief. "He's as dangerous as dynamite! His name isn't Foley; it's Red Regan. A girl that was sweet on him came in an hour ago and told us everything about him. The way it looks to me, she had thrown him down—doesn't want to see him again. He made her write a fake letter so he could get you to come to his home to protect him from an imaginary girl in a red mask."

"Imaginary?" chuckled Wayne.

"Yes. Once he got you there it was his intention to shoot you for sending his old man, Dan Regan, to the chair about six months ago. Remember Regan's crime?"

"Yes," said Wayne, as the Chief hung up, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth, "and I recognized Red and suspected a frame-up the moment I saw him in my house."

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

The article "What Does Your Handwriting Tell You," which appeared in No. 157, brought us such a flock of inquiries and requests for service on graphology that we have started such a department, conducted by Miss Rice. She is well known for her character delineations based on deductions from specimens of handwriting. We wish to make this a helpful department for our readers. Send us specimens of your handwriting, Miss Rice will analyze them, and the reading will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of answers can be published at a time in each issue owing to lack of space. If you desire an early reply and personal letter from Miss Rice, cut out the coupon on page 63 and send it to us, enclosing 10 cents and a stamped envelope to cover the cost of stationery, handling, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you a personal reading. The following are answers to a number of our readers who have written to Miss Rice. —THE EDITOR.

JESSIE K.—The specimen of writing you enclose for me to analyze shows a nature which is one of great ardor and ideality. A person like this will always want much from life, but will be willing to work for it, and will be more than ordinarily un-

myself a great deal, not that I think
I'm far better than any one else, it's one

selfish. I note that there is the musical temperament present, and that the personality is one of great fineness and sweetness, with an occasional flash of temper to make it interesting. Love of home is a marked element, but, coupled with this there is a love of the out-of-doors, too, and a passion for sports and great physical courage. Such a woman will have a wonderful personality, and I congratulate you on the possession of such a gift.

MISS RAY D.—There is no reason why you should worry about being bashful. That's a virtue which I wish more young folks had than you! You need not worry about not making friends, either, for as time goes on you will remedy this. What you really need to pay attention to is the training which you give yourself in school, and the training which you give yourself outside of it. To overcome that awkwardness which bothers you, take lessons in elocution and in dancing and in calisthenics.

Valetie is on Albany Southern
Railroad, an electric trolley

Take part sometimes in amateur plays. These all will help you. Don't allow your thoughts to run on yourself so much. Try to think of others, how to make them happy and how to do what will be of use to those for whom you care. This will not only help your bashfulness, but will be laying the foundation for the best kind of character.

CARTER F. V.—Yes, this part of the world—all around New York—is a bit different from the South, but the differences are all on the surface. We're all Americans, aren't we? Sure! Try to find that great common meeting ground, and you will forget that down there you drop your "r's" and that up here we don't. That's the splendid thing about this country of ours. We can be different about a lot of things, and yet not forget that we are all one big family. Your handwriting shows me that you still have something of a temper, and that you need more moderation, in all sorts of ways. You are loving and affectionate, and excessively sensitive. Look out for that last trait. It will make you a great deal of unhappiness if not controlled.

Watch For No. 163

We wish to call your special attention to the large number of interesting stories and articles to appear in the next issue of this magazine. The leading feature is going to be one of HAMILTON CRAIGIE'S best novelettes, entitled

"THE LOCK AND KEY"

Next, there will be the concluding chapters of J. B. WARRENTON'S serial

"A TEST OF CONSCIENCE"

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"CLUE—ONE HAIRPIN," by Howard Philip Rhoades
"CHANCE," by Dorothy Shea
"ON THE TRAIL OF DOPE," by Adolphe Barreaux
"THE DEVILISH CONTRIVANCE," by Maurice Coons
"THE LAST JOB," by Arthur M. Mills
"BETRAYED BY WORDS," by Edgar Daniel Kramer

A number of intensely interesting short articles will make up the rest of the magazine, and we are sure you will enjoy them.

Please recommend "MYSTERY MAGAZINE" to your friends and acquaintances; we want them to see what remarkably good detective stories it contains.

THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free.

The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.

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Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

A long-sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
—Omar Khayyam.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose $2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman $2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.

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